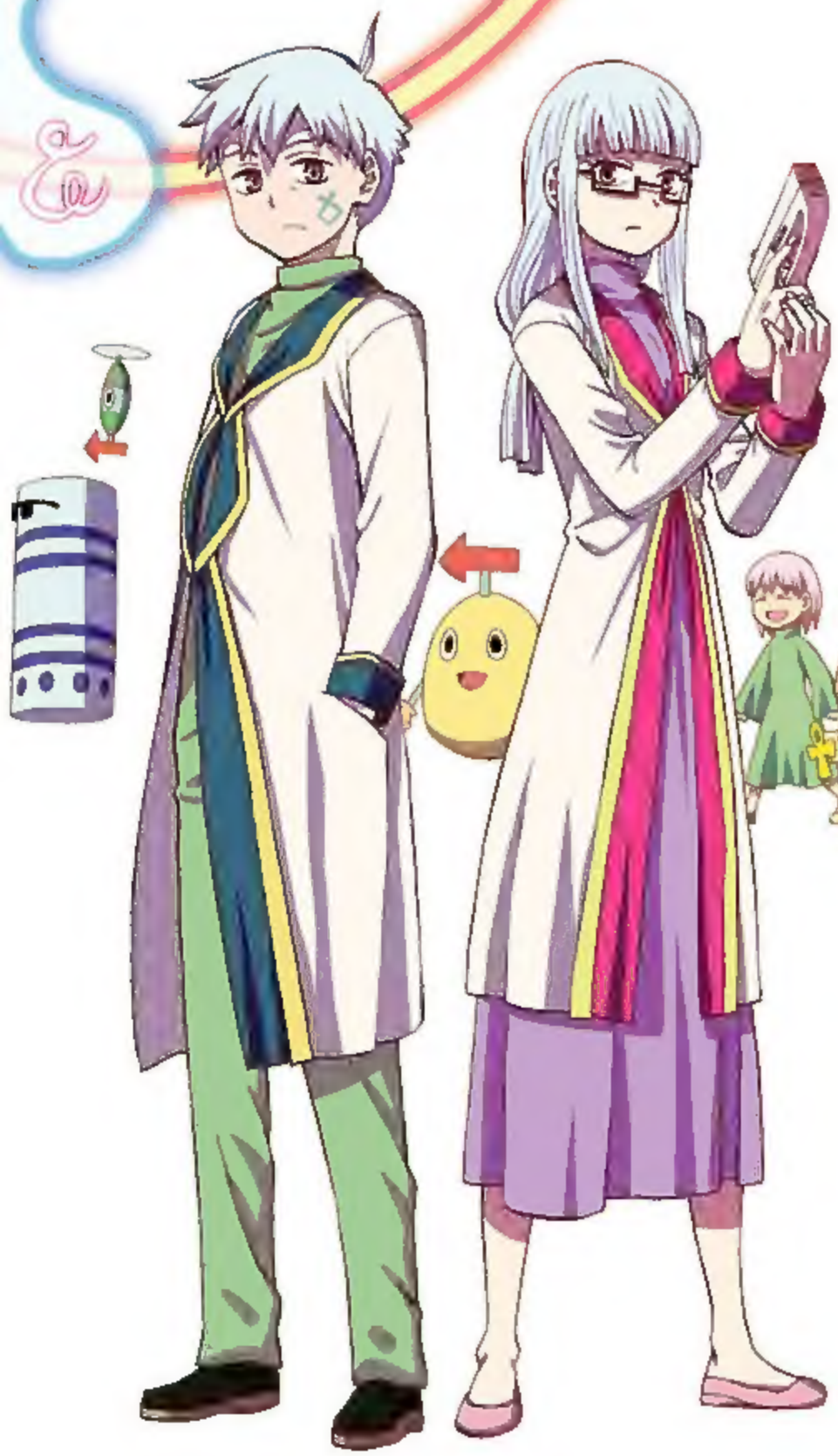
YOUNG KING COMICS

スピリットサークル

04

魂環



水上悟志

YOUNG KING COMICS

スピリットサークル

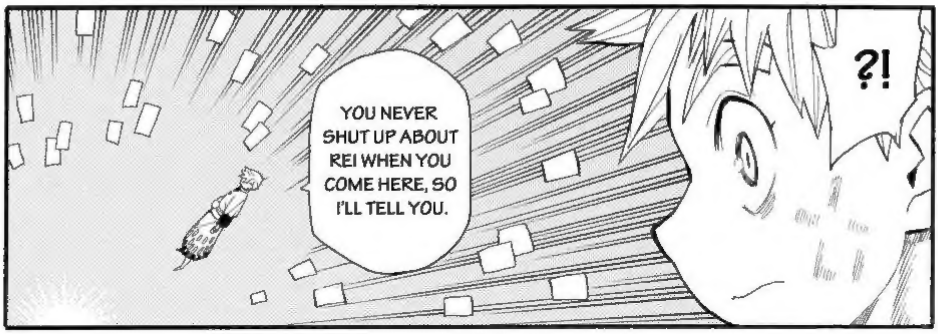
魂環

04

水上悟志

CIRCLE 22
LAFALLE 1

I MISS REI...
2
三
N
REI...
REI...
REI...
REI...!!


?!
YOU NEVER SHUT UP ABOUT REI WHEN YOU COME HERE, SO I'LL TELL YOU.

YOU CAN'T SEE THAT SPIRIT AGAIN.

FOR...
MAS...

TU...
MAS--
FOR
...

NAAA!!

?!
IMPRES-
SIVE
AS AN OLD SOUL, IT'S NO WONDER YOU'RE DIFFERENT.
TO THINK YOU'D MANAGE TO CATCH ME HERE.
WHAT ?!

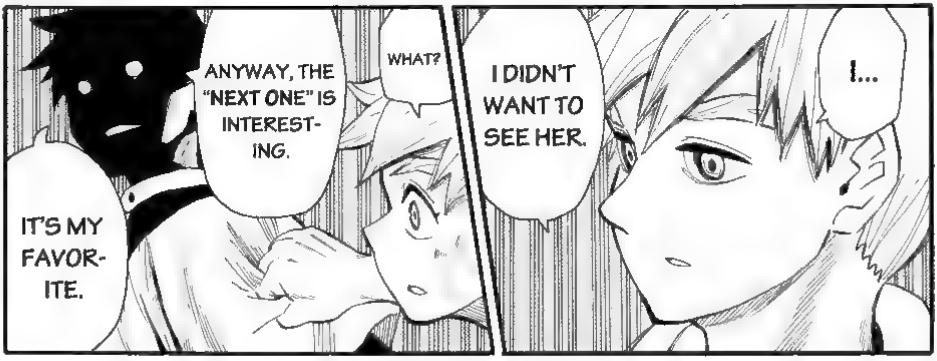
YAAAH !!
!!
GOTCHA !!
GRAB

NORMALLY, BY CALLING UP MEMORIES OF A PAST LIFE FROM BELOW THE DIMENSIONAL BOUNDARY OF HIMSELF TO THE SURFACE OF HIS CONSCIOUSNESS, AN OLD SOUL CAN DEEPLY INTEGRATE--
YOU HAVE MULTIPLE LIFETIMES INSIDE YOU.
IT MEANS YOU'RE SOMEONE WHO HAS EXPERIENCED MANY PAST LIVES ON A DEEP LEVEL.
SHUT UP!!
IMPOS-SIBLE
YEAH, I'M IMPOSSIBLY STUPID!!
MY CLASS RANK IS 220 OUT OF 260!!
DON'T ACT LIKE YOU'RE SO SMART WHEN YOU'RE JUST ME!!
DAIKI 3
TETSU 230

LISTEN UP!
A GIRL IN MY CLASS HATES ME RIGHT NOW BECAUSE OF YOU!
EXPLAIN YOURSELF!!
AND WHAT DO YOU MEAN, I CAN'T SEE REI?!
EXPLAIN IT SO THAT AN IDIOT LIKE ME CAN UNDERSTAND!!
FOOLS DEMAND EXPLANATIONS FROM WISE MEN AS THOUGH IT IS NATURAL, BUT IT'S A DIFFERENT SKILL SET.
JUST EXPLAIN IT NORMALLY THEN.
しゃべりやすい ようにしゃべって
HOWEVER'S EASIEST FOR YOU!!
THE ANSWER TO YOUR FIRST QUESTION IS "LOOK."
THERE ARE HINTS IN YOUR NEXT LIFE.
IT'S NOT QUITE A REHASH... BUT IT'S "CLOSE."
WHETHER IT'S GOOD OR EVIL... YOU CAN INTERPRET IT AS YOU SEE FIT.
WHAT DOES THAT--?
YOUR SECOND QUESTION.

THAT'S BECAUSE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THAT SOUL HAS ENDED.
WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THE SOUL YOU CALL REI AGAIN?
RIGHT?

BUT I REMEMBER HER AND WANT TO SEE HER!
BUT...
THERE'S NO WAY OUR RELATION-SHIP'S OVER!!
YOU HAVE NOTHING LEFT TO LEARN FROM REI.
REI HAS NOTHING LEFT TO LEARN FROM YOU.
WELL? I GAVE YOU BRIEF AN-SWERS.


ANYWAY, THE "NEXT ONE" IS INTEREST-ING.
WHAT?
IT'S MY FAVOR-ITE.
I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE HER.
I...

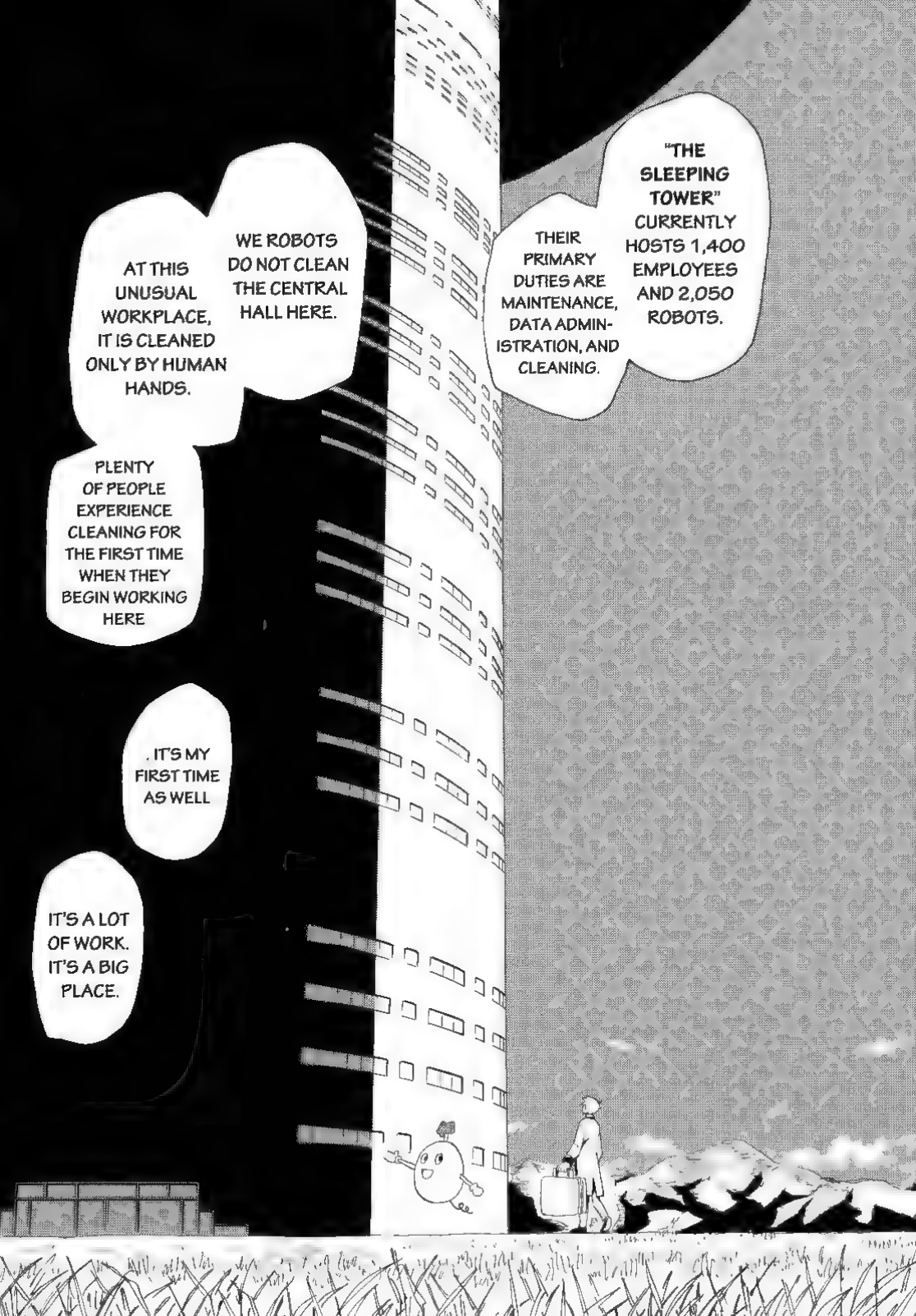
FOR...
SLIP

MAS-
TER...
YES.

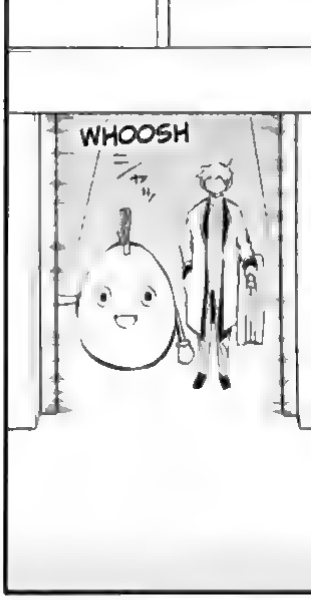
RUNE.
WELL
DONE.

WHO ARE YOU...?
FORTUNA...
WHAT?
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I CAN'T SEE HER ANY-MORE
YOU JUST SAID YOU COULDN'T SEE HER ANYMORE.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
...HUH?
I WAS JUST SPACING OUT.
PERHAPS I WAS DREAMING.
...IT'S NOTHING.

I SEE! ANYWAY, WE'RE ALMOST THERE.
THE CENTER OF NON-LIVING SPIRIT MANAGE-MENT.
ALSO KNOWN AS "THE SLEEPING TOWER."
A DREAM... WITH ONLY A SENSE OF LOSS...
...CAN'T SEE HER?
NO.
I CAME TO SEE HER.

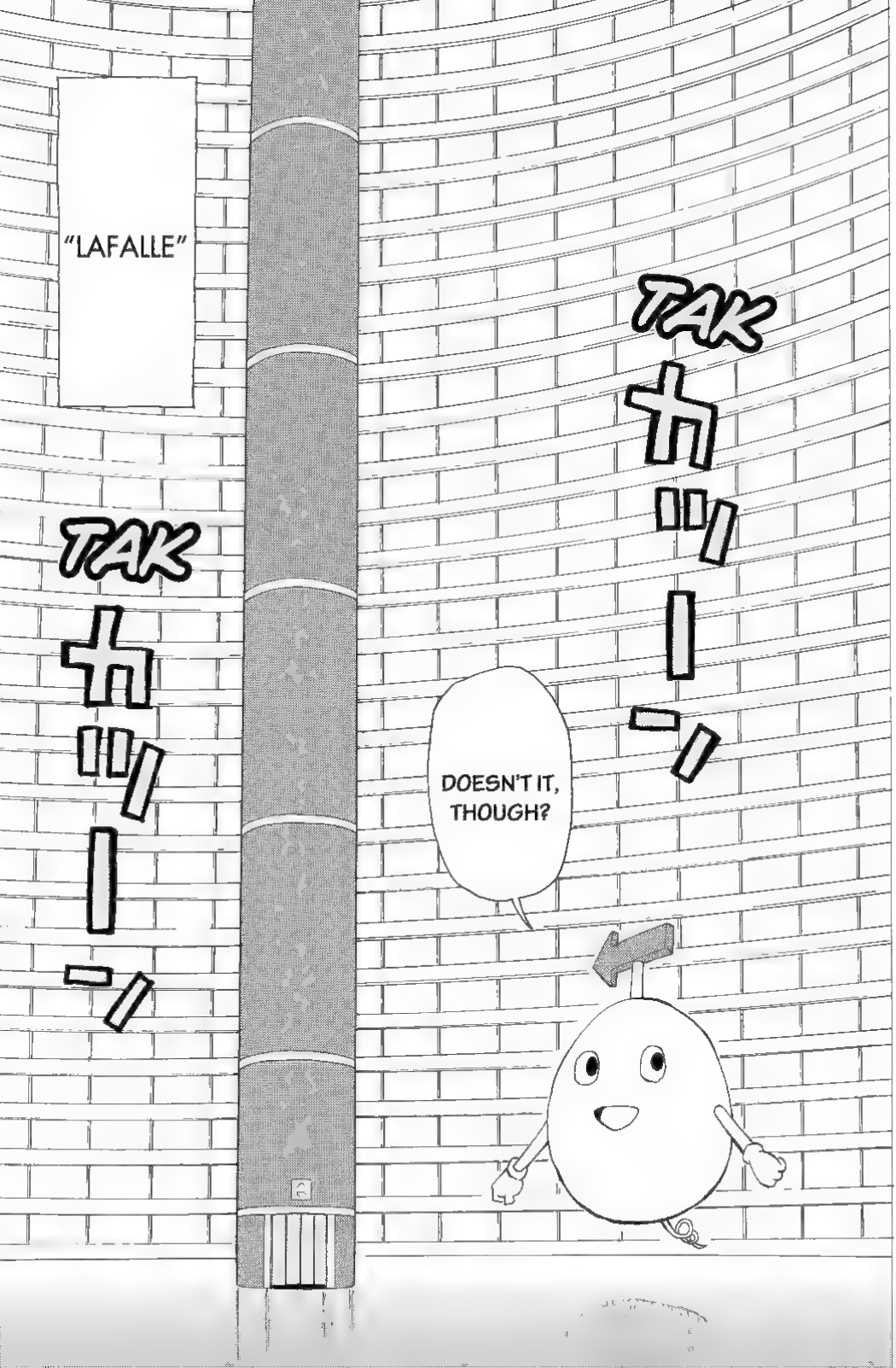

"THE SLEEPING TOWER" CURRENTLY HOSTS 1,400 EMPLOYEES AND 2,050 ROBOTS.
THEIR PRIMARY DUTIES ARE MAINTENANCE, DATA ADMINISTRATION, AND CLEANING.
WE ROBOTS DO NOT CLEAN THE CENTRAL HALL HERE.
AT THIS UNUSUAL WORKPLACE, IT IS CLEANED ONLY BY HUMAN HANDS.
PLENTY OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCE CLEANING FOR THE FIRST TIME WHEN THEY BEGIN WORKING HERE
. IT'S MY FIRST TIME AS WELL
IT'S A LOT OF WORK. IT'S A BIG PLACE.

CHAPTER 6
THIS PLACE LOOKS WORTHY OF CLEANING...
TAK
カーーーン
TAK


WHOOSH

WE ARE NOW ENTERING THE CENTRAL HALL.
ERK

TAK
カーーーン
TAK
カーーーン
I SEE...


"LAFALLE"
TAK
TAK
DOESN'T IT, THOUGH?

DING
HEY!! WEL-COME.
OH. THANK YOU.
I MUST BE GOING NOW.
THE MANAGER WILL GUIDE YOU FROM HERE.
I'M THE MANAGER, CLARO.
YOU MUST BE LAFALLE-KUN.
WEL-COME.
MIND IF I MAKE THE OUTER WALLS TRANSPARENT? ARE YOU OKAY WITH HEIGHTS?
I'M FINE. GO AHEAD.
IT'S 20% MANAGE-MENT AND 80% CLEANING.
I'LL SHOW YOU A-ROUND
GET IN.
WORK-ING HERE ISN'T EASY
NICE TO MEET YOU.
YES.
NICE TO MEET YOU.

ISN'T MANAGING THIS PLACE DIFFICULT?
THERE MUST BE A LOT.
THERE SURE ARE. WE'VE GOT 10 BILLION
WE LET THE ROBOTS HANDLE MOST OF THE ADMIN-ISTRATION, SO IT'S FINE...
THE CLEANING HAS TO BE DONE BY HUMAN HANDS, THOUGH
IT'S NORMALLY THE OPPO-SITE.
IT'S AN EMOTIONAL THING.
AN EMO-TIONAL THING?
...I THINK I UNDER-STAND.
YOU'RE RIGHT... AFTER ALL, IT'S "THE SLEEPING TOWER."

THIS IS LAFALLE-KUN, WHO'S STARTING WITH GROUP F TODAY.
BE NICE TO HIM.
I'M LAFALLE.
IT'S A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU.

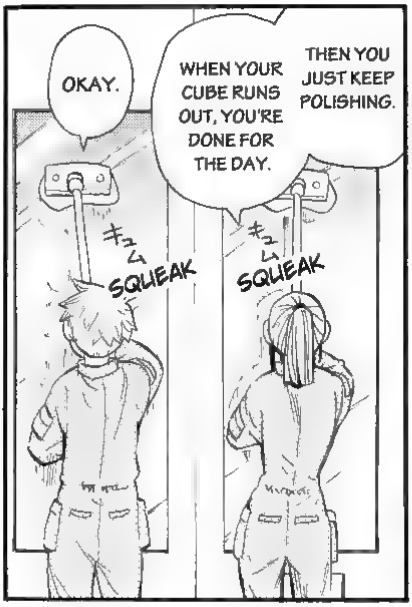
I'M TALL. NICE TO MEET YOU.
NICE TO MEET YOU
NICE TO MEET YOU.
I'M TAKA. NICE TO MEET YOU.
THANK YOU.
OKAY.

...

IT'S AN ARTIFICIAL HAND.
DID YOU NOTICE?
YES.

I'M LAPIS.
IT'S A PLEA-SURE.
LIKE-WISE.

RE-ALLY?
MY RIGHT HAND AND LEFT LEG ARE ARTI-FICIAL.
MY LEFT HAND AND RIGHT LEG ARE ARTIFICIAL.
SO IS MINE.
WE'RE MIRROR IMAGES.
NAH... IT'S OKAY...
UM... SORRY ABOUT THIS.
FINE, THEN...
GET BACK TO WORK AFTER YOUR BREAKS.
SEE YOU LATER, THEN.
BUT I'VE ONLY WORKED HERE A MONTH.
YOU'LL DO GREAT.
LOOKS LIKE YOU GET ALONG.
LAPIS, YOU'RE TRAINING THE NEWBIE.


OKAY.
WHEN YOUR CUBE RUNS OUT, YOU'RE DONE FOR THE DAY.
THEN YOU JUST KEEP POLISHING.
キュム SQUEAK
キュム SQUEAK

UH HUH.
RIGHT
ADJUST THE LENGTH OF YOUR BRUSH AND WATER PRESSURE HERE.
PLACE YOUR WATER CUBE HERE.
THE CUBES ARE HEAVY, SO BE CAREFUL.

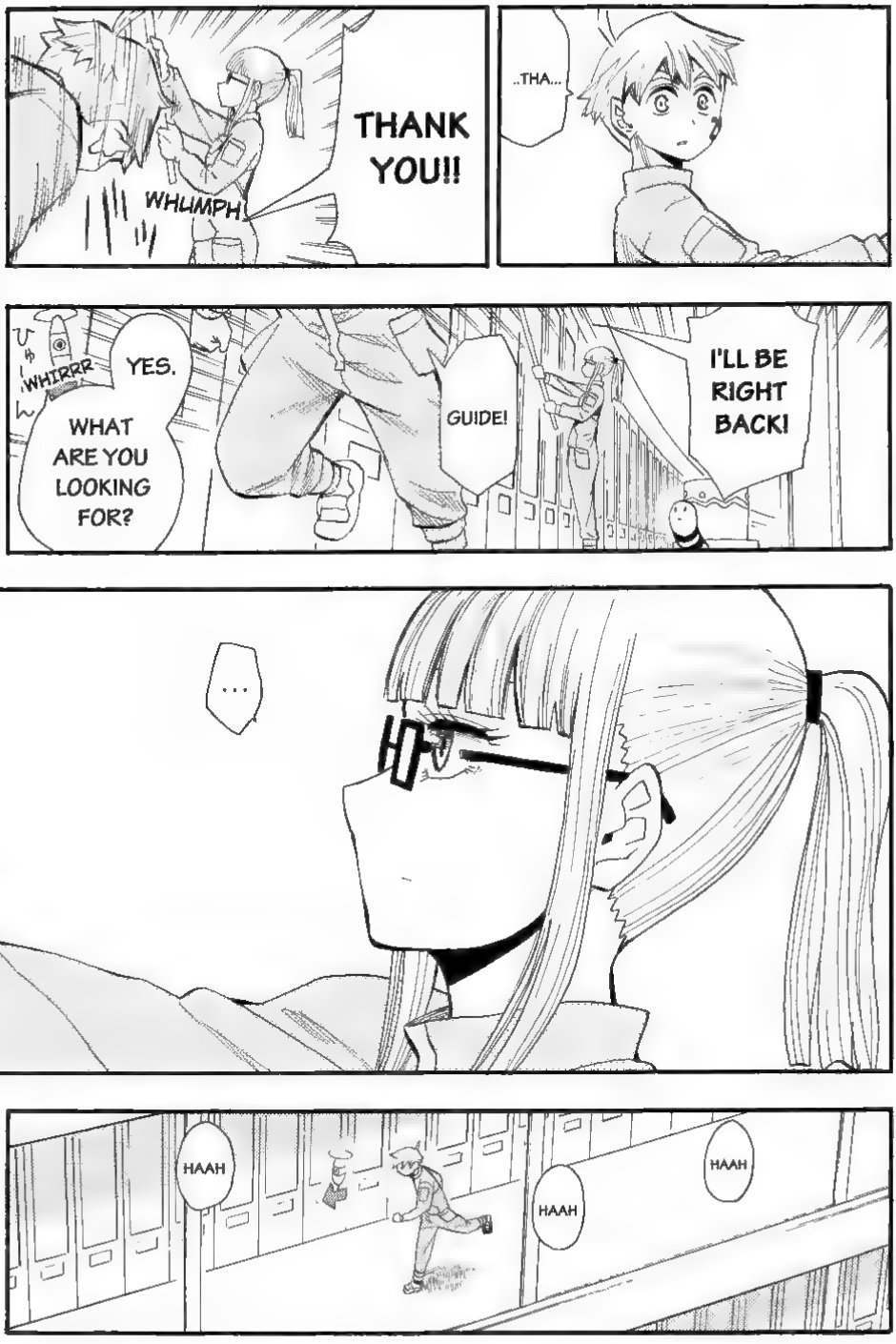
...ARE YOU RELATED TO THE NON-LIVING AS WELL?

...I KNOW.

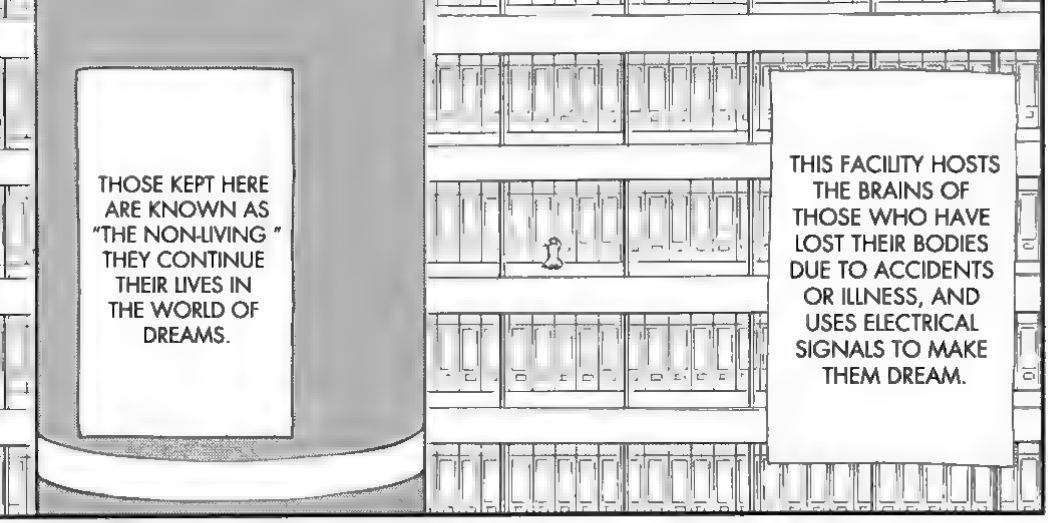
THE CASES ARE STURDY, BUT POLISH THEM GENTLY.
THE ONES INSIDE... THE NON-LIVING... ARE STILL ALIVE.

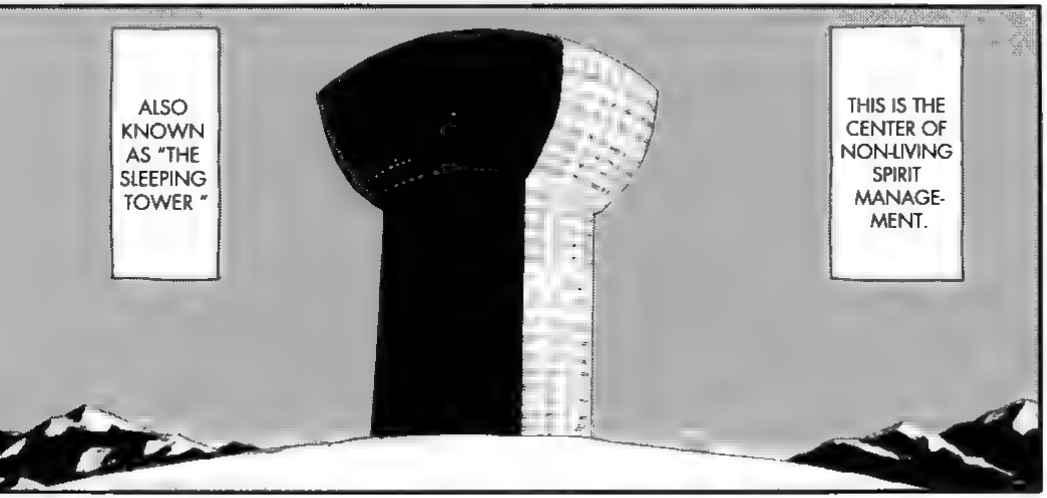
MOST PEOPLE WHO WORK HERE HAVE NON-LIVING RELATIVES.
DO YOU KNOW THEIR SEARCH CODE? YOU COULD GO SEE THEM NOW.

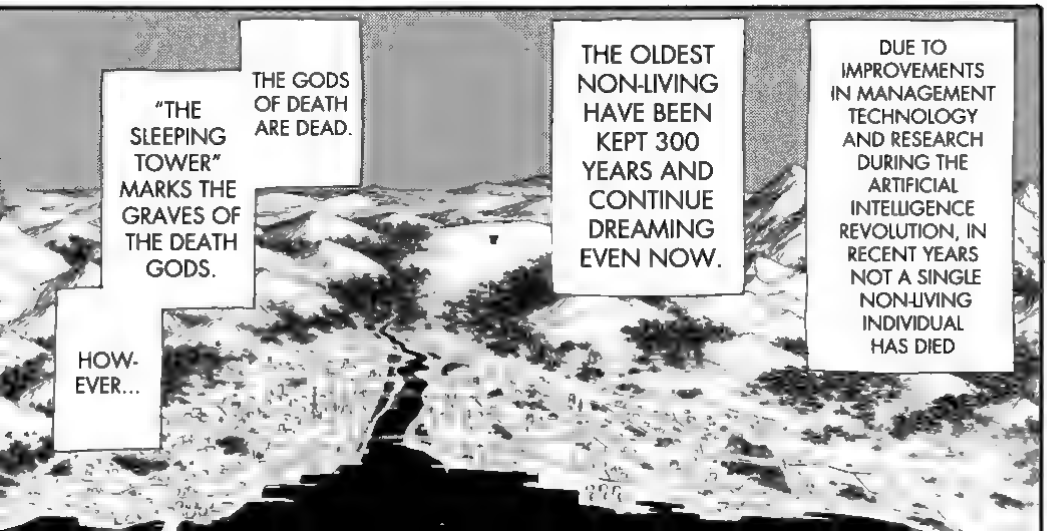
WELL... KIND OF.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "AS WELL"?

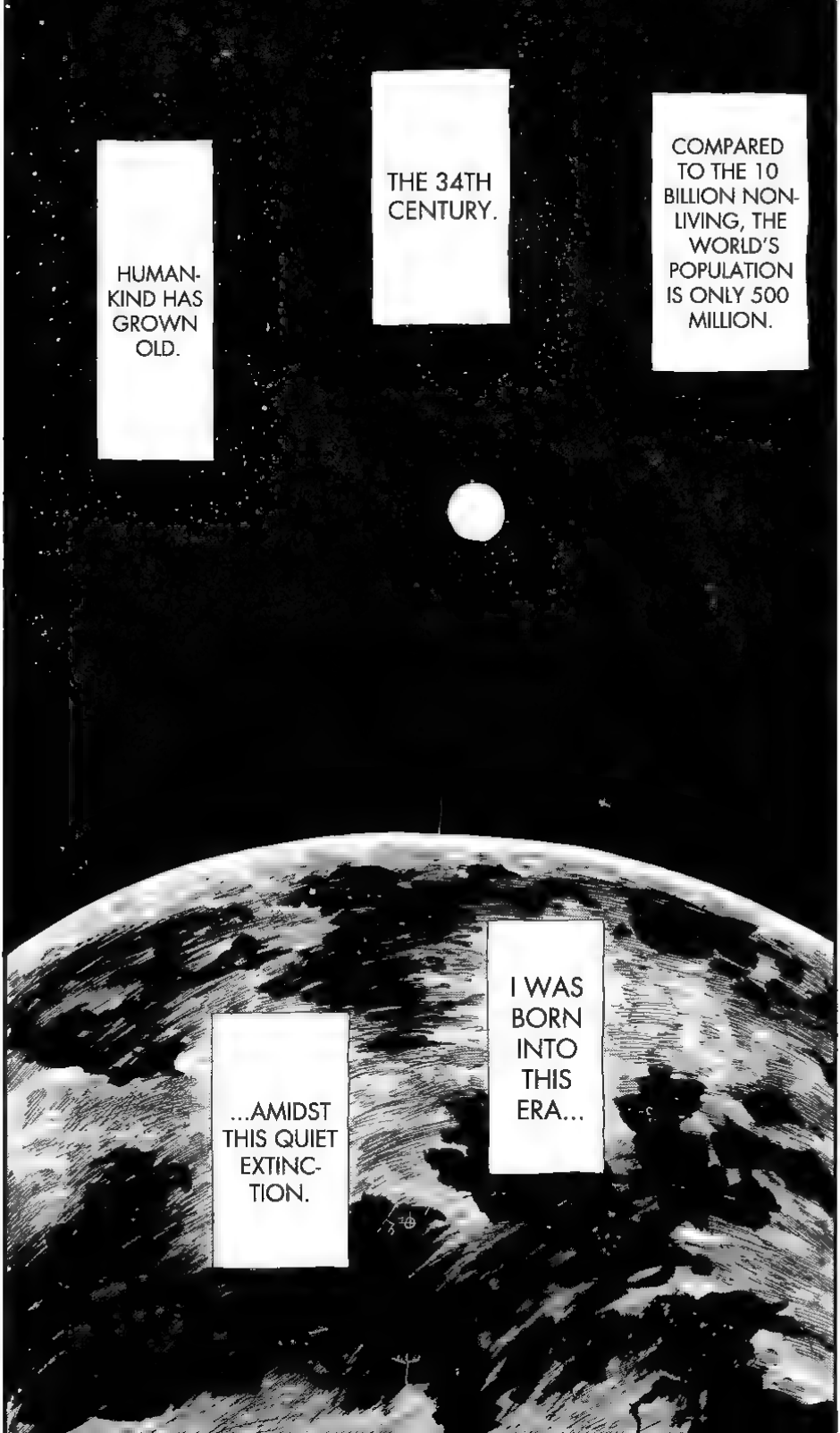

THANK YOU!!
WHUMPH
..THA...
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!
GUIDE!
WHIRRR
YES.
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?
...
HAAH
HAAH
HAAH

HUFF
HUFF
AS PER YOUR REQUEST, THESE ARE NUMBERS ZZF7785...
...AND ZZF7786.
HUFF
HUFF
I'M HERE...
HUFF...
HUFF...
IT'S BEEN A WHILE...
UNCLE AIZEN... RIFFLE...
I CAME TO SEE YOU...
I CAME...
I'LL PROTECT YOU...
FOREVER... I'LL PROTECT YOU BOTH...


THOSE KEPT HERE ARE KNOWN AS "THE NON-LIVING." THEY CONTINUE THEIR LIVES IN THE WORLD OF DREAMS.
THIS FACILITY HOSTS THE BRAINS OF THOSE WHO HAVE LOST THEIR BODIES DUE TO ACCIDENTS OR ILLNESS, AND USES ELECTRICAL SIGNALS TO MAKE THEM DREAM.


ALSO KNOWN AS "THE SLEEPING TOWER."
THIS IS THE CENTER OF NON-LIVING SPIRIT MANAGE-MENT.


"THE SLEEPING TOWER" MARKS THE GRAVES OF THE DEATH GODS.
THE GODS OF DEATH ARE DEAD.
HOW-EVER...
THE OLDEST NON-LIVING HAVE BEEN KEPT 300 YEARS AND CONTINUE DREAMING EVEN NOW.
DUE TO IMPROVEMENTS IN MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH DURING THE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE REVOLUTION, IN RECENT YEARS NOT A SINGLE NON-LIVING INDIVIDUAL HAS DIED


HUMAN-KIND HAS GROWN OLD.
THE 34TH CENTURY.
COMPARED TO THE 10 BILLION NON-LIVING, THE WORLD'S POPULATION IS ONLY 500 MILLION.
...AMIDST THIS QUIET EXTINC-TION.
I WAS BORN INTO THIS ERA...

CIRCLE 23
LAFALLE 2

WHAT

ZZSHHH

WHOA.

TWITCH

IT'S SUNNY OUTSIDE.

...?

THAT WAS SURPRISING.

IT WAS A DREAM?

CHANGE SETTINGS TO LONG NON-REM, LOW STIMU-LATIONS.

YOUR BED'S ALARM SETTINGS HAVE BEEN CHANGED.

GOOD MORNING, LAFALLE SAN.

WILL YOU BE EATING BREAKFAST IN YOUR ROOM OR THE CAFE-TERIA?

...THE CAFE-TERIA.

RAIN.

A DREAM ABOUT RAIN...

I WANT SOMETHING FRIED...

I RECOMMEND A SALAD. YOU HAVE A VITAMIN DEFICIENCY.

WHAT SHOULD I EAT?

おはようございます GOOD MORNING!

MIND IF I SIT WITH YOU?

GOOD MORN-ING, LAPIS.

GO AHEAD.

GOOD MORNING.

NEWS

...WE HAVE A FOLLOW UP REPORT ON THE EXPLOSION AT THE CELLULAR RESEARCH FACILITY IN TOWN.

LEAVE ME ALONE.

YOU'RE HAVING FRIED FOOD FOR BREAKFAST AGAIN?

じー
STARE

じー
STARE

UGH

I WONDER IF WE'LL GET MORE NON-LIVING.

HOW TROUB-LING.

NEWS

ANTI-TECHNOLOGY TERRORIST GROUP "ARION" HAS BEEN DECLARED RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATTACK.

...

NOTHING GOOD COMES FROM WATCHING BAD NEWS.

I WAS WATCH-ING THAT.

WHY'D YOU DO THAT?

CHANGE THE CHANNEL. EDUCATION, RANDOM.

HEY.

OKAY.

A CLIONE'S MOUTH!!

WHADDYA MEAN?!

...CHANGE THE CHANNEL. COMEDY, RANDOM.

BUT I DON'T NEED AN EXPLANATION OF HORSES' MATING HABITS...

THERE YOU GO.

NEIGH NEIGH

AND SO, IN THIS MANNER...

AYE AYE, SIR.

WE'RE WORKING HERE TODAY.

MANAGER CLARO.

WORKING HARD?

WHAT? TAKA-SAN IS? WHY?

BY THE WAY...

I HEARD TAKA-SAN'S QUITTING NEXT WEEK.

YES, RIGHT.

IT'S BEEN ABOUT THREE YEARS SINCE YOU GUYS STARTED HERE...

...ISN'T THAT RIGHT?

HEY.

GOOD AFTER-NOON.

HELLO, MANAGER.

HERE'S YOUR FIRST QUESTION.

THESE THINGS INSIDE THE CASES.

WHAT QUES-TIONS?

ARE YOU GOING TO ASK US YOUR QUESTIONS?

YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT?

AREN'T THEY ALIVE?

I BELIEVE THEY'RE ALIVE.

...ARE ALIVE?

DO YOU THINK THE NON-LIVING...

I HAVEN'T.

NOPE.

HAVE YOU SEEN ANY GHOSTS HERE?

QUESTION TWO.

...WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?

SNAP!

KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.

I SEE. THANK YOU.

RUMOR HAS IT HE'S CHOOSING THE NEXT CANDIDATE FOR MANAGER WITH HIS QUESTIONS...

BUT IT'S A MYSTERY AS TO WHICH ANSWERS QUALIFY YOU TO BE A CANDIDATE.

ONCE YOU'VE WORKED HERE FOR ABOUT THREE YEARS, THE MANAGER ASKS YOU THESE WEIRD QUESTIONS.

AN OLDER EMPLOYEE TOLD ME.

YOU WOULDN'T BE MUCH OF MANAGER IF YOU THOUGHT THE NON-LIVING WERE DEAD.

OH, RIGHT...

THIS PLACE EXISTS BECAUSE THE NON-LIVING ARE ALIVE.

THE NON-LIVING ARE DEAD, AND YOU'VE SEEN GHOSTS.

...MAY-BE?

HUH... MAYBE IT'S THE ANSWERS THAT GO AGAINST COMMON SENSE.

DON'T YOU FIND HIS QUESTIONS ODD?

MAYBE THERE'S A DEAD PERSON AND HE'S TRYING TO FIND OUT...

SOMEONE MUST'VE SEEN ITS GHOST!!

...IF ANYONE'S NOTICED HE'S HIDING IT...?!

WHAT IF...

HEY.

THAT'S RIDICU-LOUS.

...

...YOU'RE RIGHT.

WHAT ABOUT YOU? WHERE ARE YOUR RELATIVES?

I SEE...

A LOT OF PEOPLE SEEM TO QUIT ONCE THEIR CLEANING REACHES THE PLACE WHERE THEIR NON-LIVING RELATIVES ARE SLEEPING.

I WONDER WHY TAKA-SAN'S QUITTING.

TAKA-SAN'S NO EXCEPTION.

MINE ARE... I'LL PROBABLY GET TO THAT AREA AROUND NEXT SPRING...

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

HONESTLY, I MISSED MY CHANCE TO QUIT.

I PASSED THEM RIGHT AROUND THE TIME I STARTED...

...

HMMM...

THAT'S SOON WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?

I DUNNO. I HADN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

...EVERY DAY WE POLISHED THE CASES OF THE SLEEPING NON-LIVING.

FROM MORNING TO NIGHT...

WE SPENT MOST OF OUR TIME WORKING IN SILENCE.

BECAUSE OF IT, WE HAD NOTHING TO TALK ABOUT.

...

...

THAT WAS ALL OUR LIVES WERE.

SLEEP, WAKE, POLISH.

SLEEP, WAKE, POLISH.

. .THINGS AS TRIFLING AS CONSCIOUSNESS WOULD EASILY FLY FAR AWAY.

OH... I WAS JUST IN INDIA.

UH... REALLY...

NAMA-STE.

HUH?

SNAP

...

AND DOING SUCH MONO-TONOUS WORK IN A QUIET PLACE..

...FAR ACROSS SPACE AND TIME

IT WOULD LEAP...

DO YOU WANT TO GO SEE WHERE YOUR PARENTS WORK NEXT WEEK?

LA-FALLE...

WHIRRR
ウィーン

...

THEY SAID THEY WANT TO SEE YOU.

WE GOT THESE TICKETS.

IT'LL BE FINE. THEY'LL BE GLAD TO SEE YOU.

IF I GO, PEOPLE WILL LOOK AT ME FUNNY.

NAH.

THANK YOU FOR BEING A GOOD PLAYMATE TO RIFFLE.

THANK YOU FOR LOOKING AFTER LAFALLE.

HELLO, UNCLE AND AUNTIE.

AIZEN-SAN, RIFFLE-CHAN.

THANK YOU FOR COMING.

LA-FALLE.

WHY ARE YOU HIDING?

COME ON, LAFALLE.

IT'S NOT OFTEN THAT YOU GET TO SEE THE INSIDE OF AN ORBITING ELEVATOR.

COME. WE'LL SHOW YOU AROUND.

AN EXPLO-SION...

BREEP

?!

AN EXPLO-SION HAS OCCURRED INSIDE THE FACILITY. PLEASE EVACUATE.

BREEP

!

DADDY!!

RUMBLE

WHAT?!

HNGH!

WAIT! MY DOCU-MENTS!

BREEP

WHOA!

BREEP

THERE ARE MULTIPLE EXPLO-SIONS.

EVAC-UATE IMMEDI-ATELY.

BOOM

GWAH!!

AHHHHH!!

ZU JOLT

YOU GET TOO CAUGHT UP IN YOUR DAY-DREAMS!!

びっくりした STARTLED ME.

OH, SORRY. I WAS JUST CAUGHT UP IN AN EXPLOSION.

WHAT?!

WHA--

びっくりしたのは I'M THE ONE WHO WAS STARTLED!

ドキ BA-DUM BA-DUM

MY PARENTS WERE SEVERELY INJURED. BEFORE THEIR BRAINS COULD BE RECOVERED...

...THEY DIED.

IT WASN'T A DAY-DREAM.

IT WAS A PAST EVENT.

I LOST MY LEFT HAND AND RIGHT LEG AND HAD THEM REPLACED WITH ARTIFICIAL LIMBS.

THEY WERE SENT TO THE "SLEEPING TOWER" AS NON-LIVING.

...SUFFERED SERIOUS INJURIES TO THEIR BODIES, BUT THEIR UNSCATHED BRAINS WERE RECOVERED.

RIFFLE, AND UNCLE AIZEN WHO PROTECTED THE TWO OF US...

I SOUGHT EMPLOY-MENT AT THE "SLEEPING TOWER."

NOW ORPHANED, I WAS BROUGHT UP BY A STATE FACILITY UNTIL I CAME OF AGE.

...

SNAP

GOOD WORK.

BYE, TAKA.

TAKE CARE.

TAKE CARE, GUYS.

BYE.

FLOAT

BEEP

I'LL FIND WORK ONCE I GET SICK OF HANGING AROUND.

I'M HEADING HOME...

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO NOW?

TALL-KUN, HUH? A NEWBIE SHOULD ARRIVE IN TWO OR THREE DAYS. YOU'LL BE WORKING WITH LAPIS-KUN AND LAFALLE-KUN UNTIL THEN.

ME.

WHO WAS WORKING WITH TAKA-KUN?

トール TALL

タカ TAKA

クレオ CLEO

THE THREE OF YOU WERE CLOSE.

SINCE WE STARTED THE SAME DAY, I GUESS I'VE KNOWN CLEO FOR YEN YEARS, TOO.

I WORKED WITH TAKA FOR TEN YEARS.

WE LOVED ROBO-CAT.

YEAH. WE HAD SIMILAR TASTES.

SOUNDS GOOD.

WHY DON'T YOU JOIN ME AND CLEO?

...

OKAY, BUT WHAT IS THAT...?

REALLY? YOU SHOULD'VE SAID SOMETHING SOONER.

I LIKE ROBO-CAT, TOO.

ネコ...? CAT?

WHAT IS THAT?

YEAH, I HEARD ABOUT THAT.

ANCIENT PEOPLES SURE KNEW HOW TO MAKE ART.

UNDER THE SAND.

DID YOU HEAR? THEY FOUND A SPHINX THAT LOOKS JUST LIKE ROBO-CAT.

THIS JERK... HE ALWAYS LOOKS SULLEN WHEN HE'S AROUND ME...

HHHZZSSSH

I HOPE WE'LL GET ALONG...

I WONDER WHAT THE NEWBIE'S LIKE...?

HOUTAROU!!

ZSSH

ZSSH

RAIN

AGAIN I'VE BEEN HAVING THIS DREAM A LOT LATELY

MISTER PRIEST!

PLEASE STOP!

RETURN TO THE PLACE YOU BELONG!

THIS ISN'T WHERE YOU BELONG!

THIS IS THE LAND OF THE LIVING!

CAN YOU HEAR ME, HOUTAROU?!

ZZZSSSSH

BUT... YOU'VE MOURNED OVER THAT ENOUGH ALREADY!

IT'S BECAUSE I WAS TOO DRUNK TO NOTICE THEM LEAVING...

LET GO, AKARI!! THIS IS MY FAULT!

OH...? I CAN SEE THEIR FACES TODAY.

...CRY-
ING...?

WHY
ARE
THOSE
TWO...

ALLOW
ME TO
INTRODUCE
YOU.

I'M TALIO.
NICE TO
MEET YOU.

HE'S
GROUP F'S
NEWEST
MEMBER,

TALIO-
KUN.

YOU'LL BE WORKING WITH ME.

NICE TO MEET YOU.

THE PLEASURE IS MINE.

OH...

NOTH-ING.

WHAT'S WRONG?

AHHH!!

?!

...I MET HIM IN A DREAM...

I CAN'T TELL HER...

AGH—

GH—!

GHOST!

A GHO...

LA—

LAFALLE-SAN!

WHA—

UM, WHAT?

TALIO-KUN?

DASH!

CIRCLE 24
LAFALLE 3

EEEEK!

IT CAME UP THROUGH THE FLOOR!!

RIGHT THROUGH IT!!

WEARING A HOOD!!

...A GHOST?

IS THIS ONE OF THOSE PLACES?!

IS IT?!

TAK... TAK... TAK...

HALF? HALF WHAT?

!

THEY'RE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

HUH? THERE ARE NON-LIVING HERE.

THEY'RE HALF

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "ONE OF THOSE PLACES"?

...HUH?

HEY.

コツ…
コツ…
TAK
TAK
TAK
コツ…
TAK
コツ…

!

MANAGER!! A GHOST!

A GHOST...

OH, IT'S THE MANAGER.

WHAT'S THE MATTER?

JUST ME.

NO, I DIDN'T... TALIO-KUN'S THE ONE WHO SAW IT.

YOU BOTH SAW IT?

A GHOST..

...THAT TALIO-KUN SAW A GHOST.

LAFALLE-KUN, DON'T TELL ANYONE ELSE...

YES, SIR.

...TALIO-KUN, COULD YOU JOIN ME IN THE MANAGER'S OFFICE?

...

UM... WHAT'S GOING ON?

JUST COME WITH ME.

...ONE OF THOSE PLACES? BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH...?

THE NON-LIVING WHO SLEEP HERE IN THE CASES ARE BRAINS, BUT THEY'RE STILL ALIVE.

IF ANYTHING, ISN'T THIS PLACE THE PINNACLE OF LIFE?

HALF... WHAT...?

HALF...?

WHAT'D YOU DISCUSS WITH THE MANAGER?

SORRY. I CAN'T SAY.

HUH.

YOU'RE CLOSE FRIENDS ALREADY.

I'M FOR-BIDDEN TO SAY.

THAT'S THE THING.

YOU CAN'T? WHY NOT?

FOR-BIDDEN...?

WHISPER WHISPER

...

IN ANY CASE, LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT IT ANYMORE...

G-GOOD MORNING.

HELLO.

LAPIS.

HELLO.

I JUST DID.

WHY?

YOU JUST DID, HUH?

WHEN I SAW TALIO, I THOUGHT YOU TWO MIGHT GET ALONG.

PERHAPS BECAUSE OF THIS CONVER-SATION...

I HAD THE SAME THOUGHT.

I BET HE DRINKS A LOT.

DOESN'T HE SEEM LIKE HE LIKES HIS LIQUOR?

UNCLE AIZEN, TALIO, AND I WERE DRINKING TOGETHER FOR SOME REASON.

...TODAY'S TRIP WAS A STRANGE SIGHT.

WE ALL LOOKED LIKE PRETTY WORTHLESS TYPES.

ARE YOU GOING TO TALIO'S WELCOMING PARTY TODAY?

YEAH.

CHAOS...

MANAGER CLARO WATCHED THE THREE OF US WITH DISGUST.

BUT THEY WERE ALL LIKE THIS.

カッ、は、は、は、

EHAHAHAHA

I SAW TALIO'S FACE SEVERAL TIMES AFTER THAT.

I CAN'T DRINK AT ALL.

オレンジジュースで I'LL HAVE AN ORANGE JUICE.

OH...

SORRY.

ZZSHHH

I'M PUTTING THESE AWAY.

WE HAD TONS OF LEFTOVER BEER

I SEE...

REAL-LY?

APPARENTLY EVERYONE HAD ASSUMED TALIO WAS A BIG DRINKER.

HHH

ZZSHHH

THE RAIN DREAM.

THIS DREAM AGAIN.

HEY, TALIO.

. THAT I RECOGNIZE THAT I'M DREAMING WHEN I SEE IT NOW.

I'VE SEEN IT SO MANY TIMES. .

I'LL GIVE HIM A DRINK.

ZZSHHH

IT'S JUST A DREAM

I'LL DO WHAT I WANT.

ZZSHHH

I STOPPED HAVING THE RAIN DREAM FOR A WHILE.

URGH

LAFALLE-SAN, IT'S MORNING.

TALIO MUST REALLY HATE LIQUOR.

MY UN-EVENTFUL LIFE CONTINUED.

MY DAYS AT WORK REMAINED UNCHANGED.

SINCE THEY WERE FANTASIES, I COULD SET THE STAGE AS I PLEASED .

MY FLIGHTS OF FANCY DURING WORK WENT UNRESTRAINED.

あ" URGH

BUT I COULDN'T CONTROL THEM.

I WAS GROWING MEDICINAL HERBS SOMEWHERE IN EUROPE.

WHERE'D YOU GO TODAY?

BUT THAT WAS INTERESTING IN ITSELF

I DON'T KNOW... THE YUCATAN PENINSULA? I WAS MAKING SHOES

THEY'RE SO CLEAR.
MINE, TOO.
MY FANTASIES HAVE BEEN GOING WELL LATELY.
THAT'S NOT GOOD.
IT'S NOT.
NOW I FEEL HAZY JUST EATING.
CHEW
CHEW もぐ
もぐ
CHEW
CHEW もぐ
もぐ

I LEARNED UP TO CHAPTER THREE.

AREN'T I SMART?

I MADE HIM MY APPRENTICE, BUT..

..HE HASN'T LEARNED ANY OF HIS SOUL STUDIES.

ONLY EAST'S BAKING IS IMPROVING.

HMPH.

YOU'VE GOT A LONG WAY TO GO

BY THE TIME I WAS YOUR AGE, I WAS DOING CHAPTER FIVE.

HURK

SIR?!

FWIP

LAFALLE KUN, DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?

MAYBE IT'S ABOUT *THAT.*

WHAT DOES HE WANT?

SIR.

YES,

WHEN YOU FINISH WORK TODAY, COULD YOU COME BY THE MANAGER'S OFFICE?

WE'LL REACH THE CASES OF YOUR RELATIVES SOON, WON'T WE?

WHETHER OR NOT YOU'RE QUITTING.

HAD IT BEEN SO LONG ALREADY?

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

MANY EMPLOYEES QUIT WHEN THE REACH THE CASES OF THEIR RELATIVES

WELL, YOU NEED TO TURN IN YOUR RESIGNATION FORM ONE MONTH BEFORE YOUR DESIRED DATE.

AS LONG AS YOU UNDERSTAND THAT, YOU DON'T HAVE TO DECIDE TODAY

YOU CAN WAIT.

UM... I DON'T KNOW.

LAFALLE-KUN,

DO YOU LIKE THIS JOB?

...

PARDON ME.

I'LL THINK ABOUT IT.

...I THOUGHT THAT IT WASN'T SO BAD.

THE MOMENT I SAID IT .

I'M NOT SURE...

HUH?

...

WHAT? YOU'RE QUITTING?

...

TALIO, WOULD YOU BE SAD IF I QUIT?

...

...

I HAVEN'T DECIDED YET

WHAT ABOUT YOU, LAPIS?

HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF I QUIT?

YOU'RE A GOOD GUY.

I'D BE SAD IF YOU QUIT...

...BUT IT'S ONLY BEEN A YEAR SINCE WE MET.

I DON'T CARE WHETHER YOU'RE HERE OR NOT.

THAT'S THAT.

YES, SIR.

THAT'S THAT, THEN.

REAL-LY?

YOU PROBABLY WANT TO TAKE YOUR TIME ALONE.

...SHOULD I LEAVE?

YEAH.

YOU'RE GOING TO POLISH BOTH OF THOSE CASES, THEN?

...HEY.

SQUIRK

JUST LIKE ALWAYS.

YOU CAN STAY.

I'M BACK.

UNCLE AIZEN...

RIFFLE...

HEY, LAFALLE.

HEY, LAFALLE.

I'M GLAD, I'M GLAD.

YOU LOOK WELL. I'M GLAD.

...HEY, LAFALLE.

I THINK I WAS BORN TO PROTECT YOU.

I THINK I WAS BORN TO REPAY A DEBT TO YOU.

NOTHING MAKES US HAPPIER THAN SEEING YOU WELL.

THAT'S WHY WE DON'T REGRET LOSING OUR BODIES.

BUT THE MOMENT I MET YOU, FOR SOME REASON, I THOUGHT, "THANK YOU."

...I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS THAT I OWE YOU.

WELL, THAT'S HOW IT IS.

SORRY, SORRY.

DAD, DON'T SAY IT ALL BEFORE I GET TO TALK!

YOU SHOULD BE HAPPY AND HEALTHY FOREVER!

DON'T CRY!! I ORDER YOU NOT TO!

DON'T CRY.

BYE.

THANKS.

GOOD-BYE.

THANK YOU.

...NOW OF ALL TIMES?

THIS IS THE WORST.

WHY IS MY FANTASY GOING EXACTLY AS I WANT...

...THAT NOTHING WOULD CHANGE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WERE HERE.

I THOUGHT...

...I FELT SORT OF RELIEVED.

I WONDER WHY?

BUT WHEN I HEARD YOU WEREN'T QUITTING...

HOW SHOULD I KNOW?

I DIDN'T DISLIKE CLEANING.

I HAD NO-WHERE ELSE TO GO.

THERE WERE SEVERAL REASONS I DIDN'T QUIT.

AND I FELT THAT I UNDERSTOOD MYSELF WHEN I LOST MYSELF IN THOUGHT.

...WAS "BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH, HALF..."

...STILL BOTHERED ME.

THE WAY TALIO SAID THE TOWER...

ABOUT THE "GHOST" TALIO SAW A YEAR AGO.

I WAS CURIOUS, TOO.

. BUT NEVER FOUND AN ANSWER

I THOUGHT ABOUT IT ON MY OWN...

I NEVER ASKED HIM ABOUT IT.

AND THUS, TIME PASSED.

BECAUSE HIS ILLNESS ATTACKED HIS BRAIN, HE NEVER STAYED HERE AS A NON-LIVING.

MANAGER CLARO PASSED AWAY.

...TALIO BECAME THE NEXT MANAGER.

AS PER MANAGER CLARO'S RECOMMEN-DATION BEFORE HIS DEATH...

GET IT TOGETHER.

YEAH, BUT I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOUR DRUNKEN BEHAVIOR.

TALIO, WITH YOU IN CHARGE, MANAGER CLARO CAN REST EASY.

EVERYONE CELEBRATED TALIO'S INAUGURA-TION.

STRANGELY, NONE OF THE EMPLOYEES OBJECTED.

WEIRD?

I MIGHT HAVE HAD TOO MUCH TO DRINK TODAY.

COMING UP THROUGH THE FLOOR

I SEE SOME-THING WEIRD.

SOME-TIMES.

AM I REALLY THAT BAD WHEN I'M DRUNK?

HURM...?

THROUGH THE FLOOR..?

...LAPIS AND I...

IN MY TENTH YEAR..

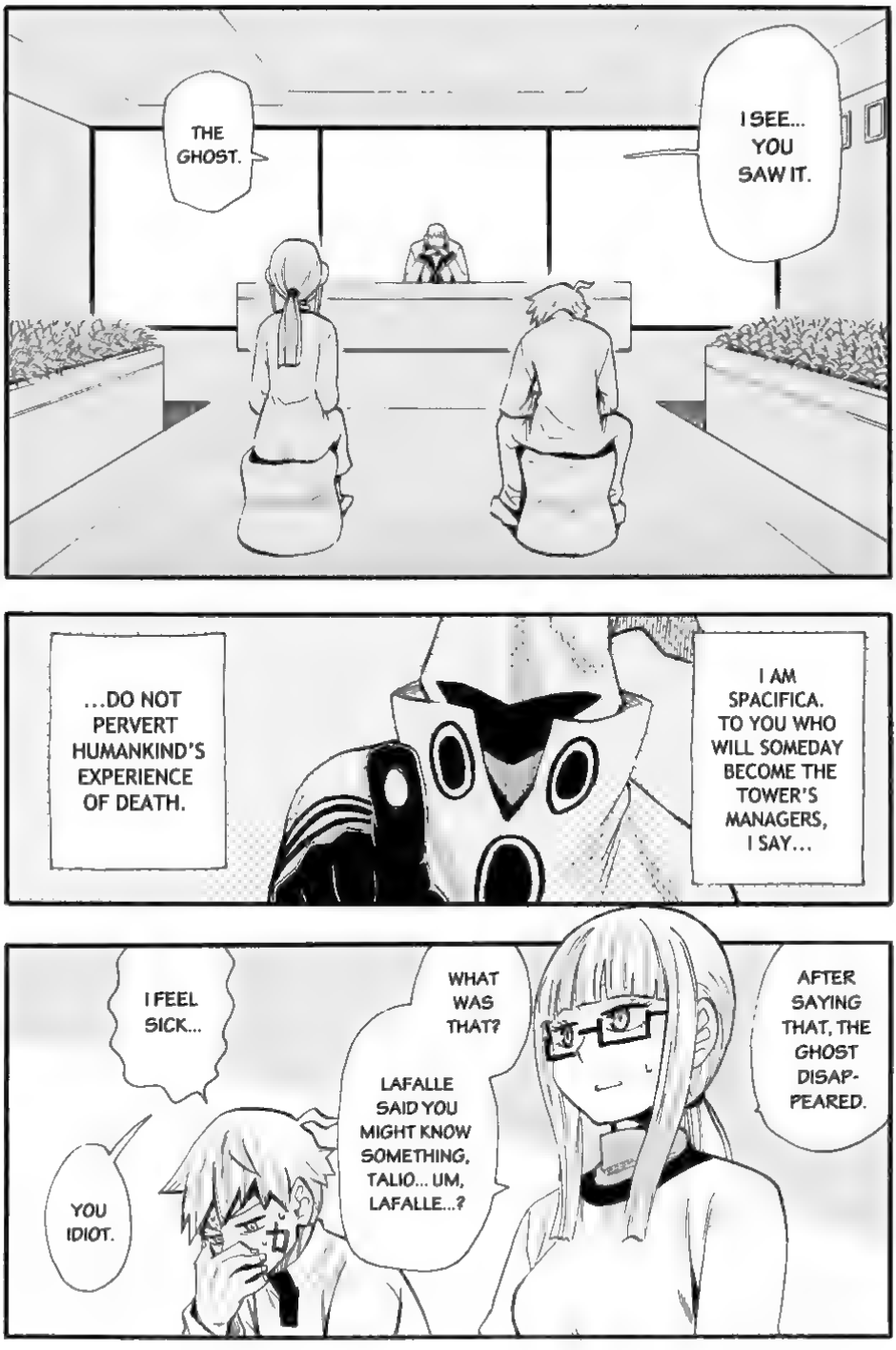
...MET A GHOST.

I AM SPACIFICA. TO YOU WHO WILL SOMEDAY BECOME THE TOWER'S MANAGERS, I SAY...

...DO NOT PERVERT HUMANITY'S EXPERIENCE OF DEATH.

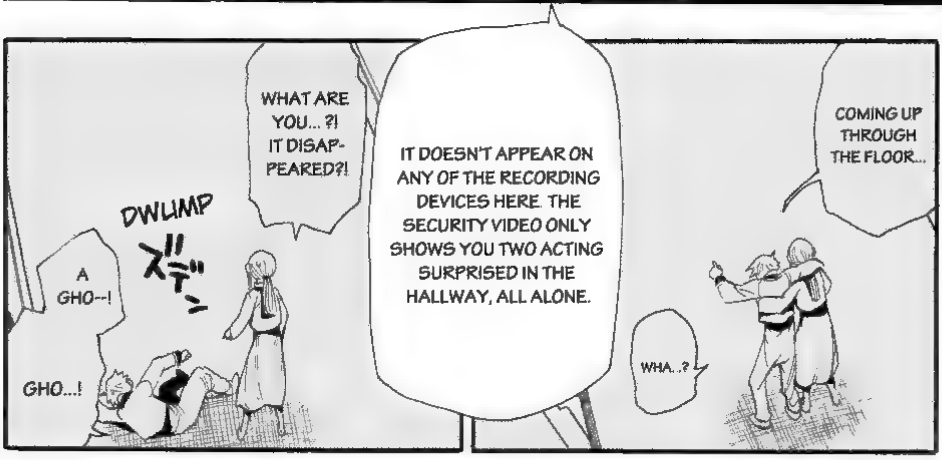
CIRCLE 25
LAFALLE 4

ALSO KNOWN AS "THE SLEEPING TOWER."
THE CENTER OF NON-LIVING SPIRIT MANAGE-MENT.
TEN YEARS HAVE PASSED.
SINCE WE STARTED WORKING HERE...


THE GHOST.
I SEE... YOU SAW IT.
...DO NOT PERVERT HUMANKIND'S EXPERIENCE OF DEATH.
I AM SPACIFICA. TO YOU WHO WILL SOMEDAY BECOME THE TOWER'S MANAGERS, I SAY...
I FEEL SICK...
WHAT WAS THAT?
AFTER SAYING THAT, THE GHOST DISAP-PEARED.
LAFALLE SAID YOU MIGHT KNOW SOMETHING, TALIO... UM, LAFALLE...?
YOU IDIOT.

SEVEN YEARS AGO, WHEN YOU SAW IT. .
MANAGER CLARO TOLD ME NOT TO SAY ANY-THING
NO, WE HAVEN'T.
...HAVE YOU TOLD ANYONE?
BETWEEN THE TIME YOU SAW THE GHOST LAST NIGHT AND NOW...
WELL. . IT'S FINE AS LONG AS YOU DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING...
I-I WAS TOLD NOT TO TELL ANYONE...
EVEN THOUGH IT'S SO INTER-ESTING?
SAY WHAT? TALIO'S SEEN IT, TOO? SEVEN YEARS AGO?
AND YOU NEVER MENTIONED THAT?
ESPECIALLY YOU, LAPIS-SAN.
PLEASE DON'T TELL ANYONE WHAT I'M ABOUT TO TELL YOU.
...!
WELL, THEN. FIRST, THE TRUE IDENTITY OF THE "GHOST" IS...
IS THIS THE KIND OF PERSON SHE IS?
HMPH
YOU BETCHA.

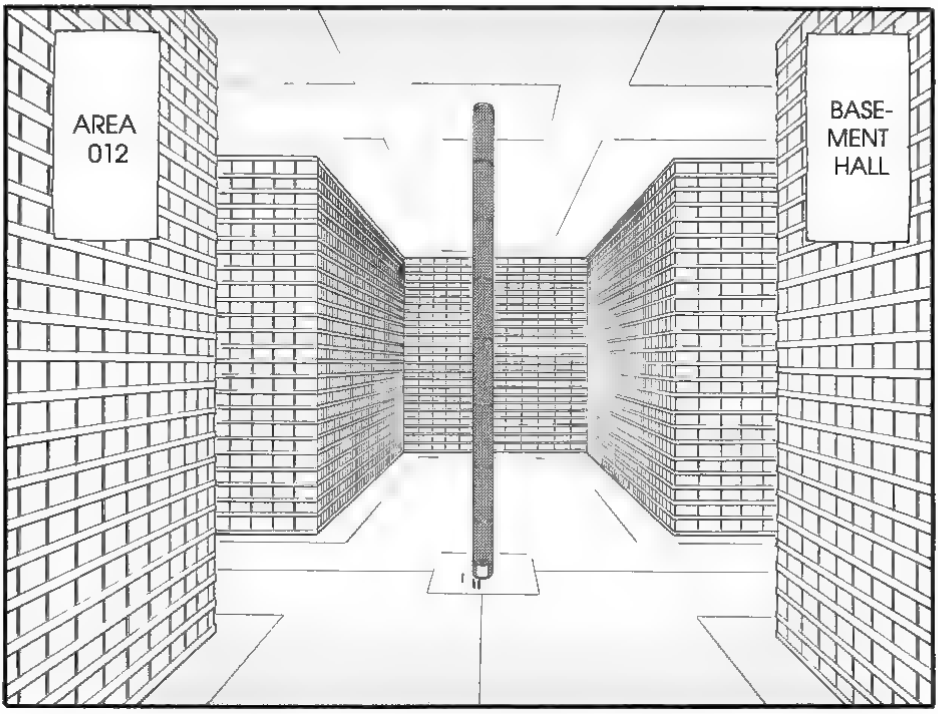
...A MYSTERY.


WHAT ARE YOU...?! IT DISAP-PEARED?!
DWLIMP
ズデン
A GHO--!
GHO...!
IT DOESN'T APPEAR ON ANY OF THE RECORDING DEVICES HERE. THE SECURITY VIDEO ONLY SHOWS YOU TWO ACTING SURPRISED IN THE HALLWAY, ALL ALONE.
COMING UP THROUGH THE FLOOR...
WHA..?

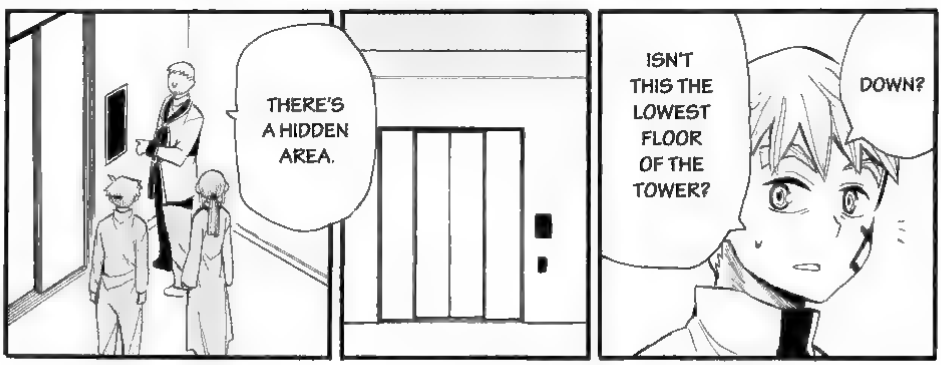
YES. BECAUSE OF THAT..
"TO YOU WHO WILL SOMEDAY BECOME THE TOWER'S MANAGERS, I SAY..."
DOES THAT MEAN...
...NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT, THE GHOST SAID...
..FOR SOME REASON, EVERY MANAGER HAS SEEN THE GHOST, WHILE THE OTHER EMPLOYEES HAVE NOT.
IT'S A TOTAL MYSTERY HOWEVER..

...YOU BOTH ARE NOW CANDIDATES FOR THE NEXT MANAGER POSITION.

I'M JUST HUNG-OVER.
I AGREE THAT IT SOUNDS LIKE A PAIN IN THE ASS, THOUGH.
BUT IT SOUNDS LIKE A DRAG.
...TRY NOT TO LOOK SO MISERABLE ABOUT IT.
I'M BUSY, TOO.
I NEED TO SLEEP.
I'M GOING TO BE BUSY WATCHING ROBO-CAT.
BY THE WAY, YOU BOTH HAVE THE DAY OFF, DON'T YOU?
ANY AFTER-NOON PLANS?
I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL.
BEEP
WE'LL HOLD A "STUDY GROUP."
LET'S MEET AFTER LUNCH IN BASEMENT HALL AREA 012.
AWWW...
THAT'S AN ORDER.


AREA 012
BASE-MENT HALL

WE'LL TAKE ELEVATOR SEVEN DOWN EVEN FARTHER.
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO COME CLEAN HERE THE YEAR AFTER NEXT.
I'VE NEVER BEEN TO THE BASEMENT BEFORE.

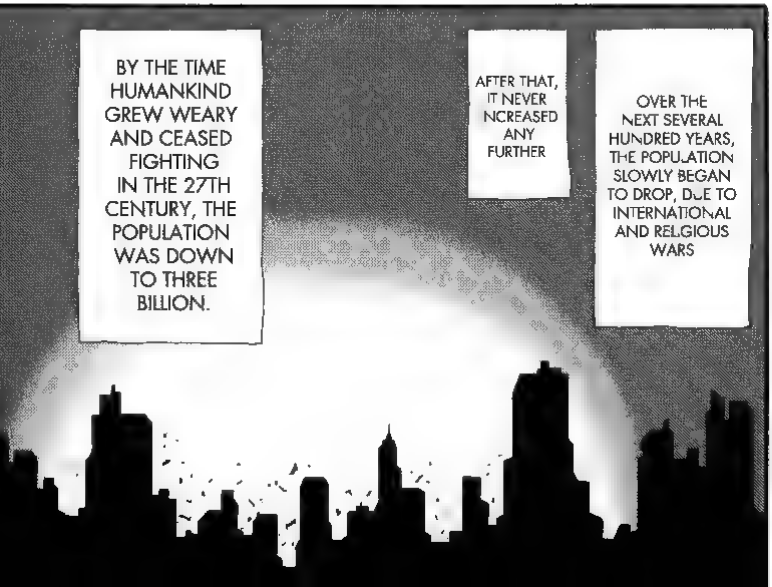

THERE'S A HIDDEN AREA.
ISN'T THIS THE LOWEST FLOOR OF THE TOWER?
DOWN?

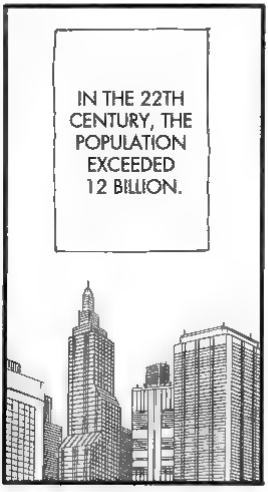
CODE-NAME...
..."AREA SPACIFICA."
AREA SPACIFICA

THIS SPACE IS COMPLETELY ISOLATED FROM THE NETWORK.
BY THE WAY, THERE ARE NO ROBOTS HERE.
WHAT IS THIS PLACE...?
WH- WHAT THE HECK...?!
ANCIENT RUINS?!
THIS WAY.
CLACK
I WAS SHOCKED AT FIRST, TOO.
THE ENTIRE AREA IS ISOLATED?! IS THAT EVEN POSSIBLE?!
I'VE SEEN THIS IN THE DATA BANK.
IT LOOKS LIKE AN ANCIENT CLASS-ROOM.
WHAT IS THIS...? WHAT...?
WE WILL USE INK PENS AND PAPER. NOTES DO NOT REMOVE THEM FROM THIS ROOM
TELL NO ONE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS HERE.

OUR SUBJECT IS HISTORY.
I WILL NOW BEGIN THE LECTURE.

THE TRUTH BEHIND HUMANITY'S DECLINE.

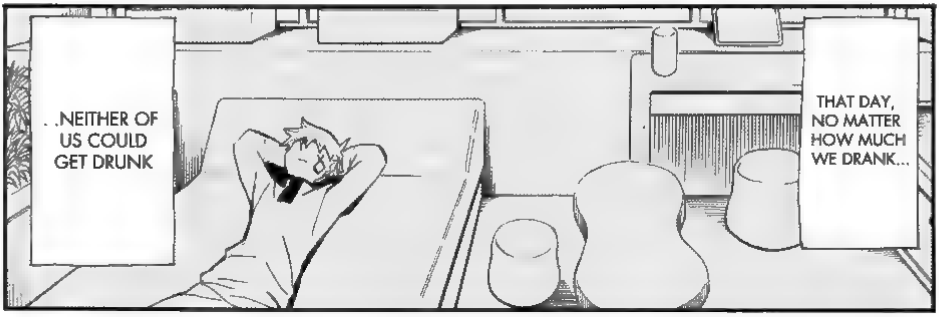

BY THE TIME HUMANKIND GREW WEARY AND CEASED FIGHTING IN THE 27TH CENTURY, THE POPULATION WAS DOWN TO THREE BILLION.
AFTER THAT, IT NEVER NCREASED ANY FURTHER
OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL HUNDRED YEARS, THE POPULATION SLOWLY BEGAN TO DROP, DUE TO INTERNATIONAL AND RELGIOUS WARS

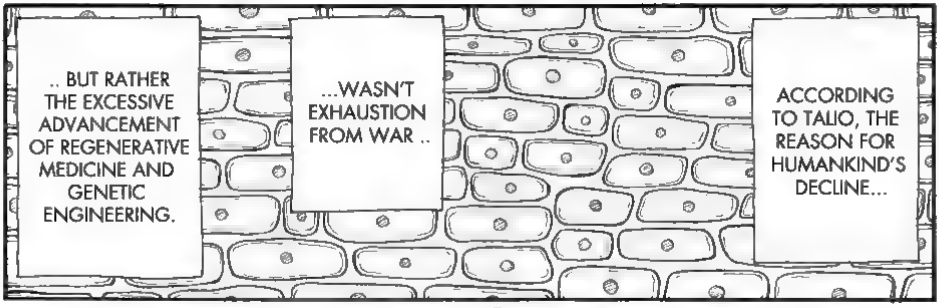

IN THE 22TH CENTURY, THE POPULATION EXCEEDED 12 BILLION.

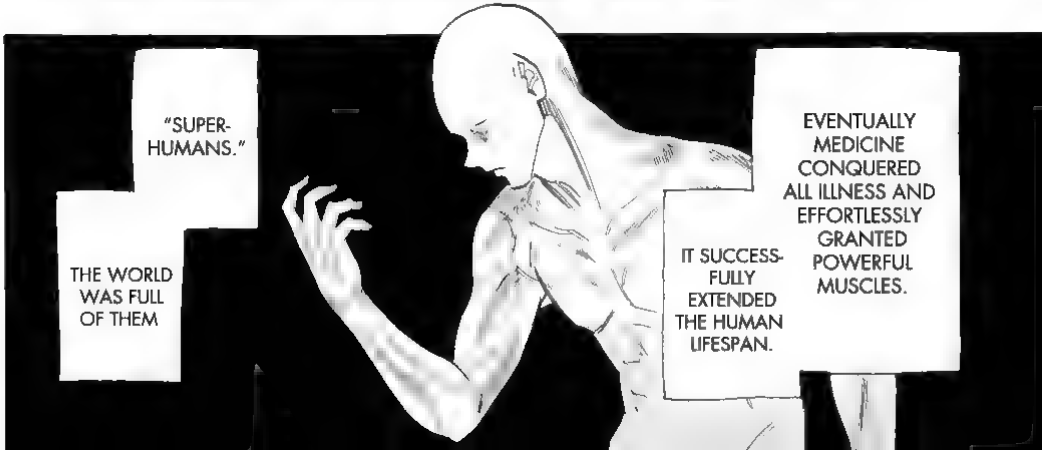
MANKIND HASN'T WAGED WAR SINCE THE 23TH CENTURY.
...IT'S ALL A LIE. THE HISTORY PASSED DOWN FROM MANAGER TO MANAGER IN THE SLEEPING TOWER IS DIFFERENT.
THAT'S THE HISTORY WE KNEW
...
OVER GENERATIONS, THE GOVERNMENT "TRAINED" HUMANKIND TO DESPISE CONFLICT.
THAT HUMANKIND WAS CORNERED BY WARFARE IS A LIE SPREAD BY THE UNIFIED GOVERNMENT.
I AM ABOUT TO DESCRIBE TO YOU. .
...A HISTORY OF SUFFERING, SHARED BY THE UNIFIED GOVERNMENT
...WHAT YOU SHOULD REALIZE...
...IS THIS POLICY ISN'T A CONSPIRACY REFLECTING THE PERSONAL DESIRES OF A FEW INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE.

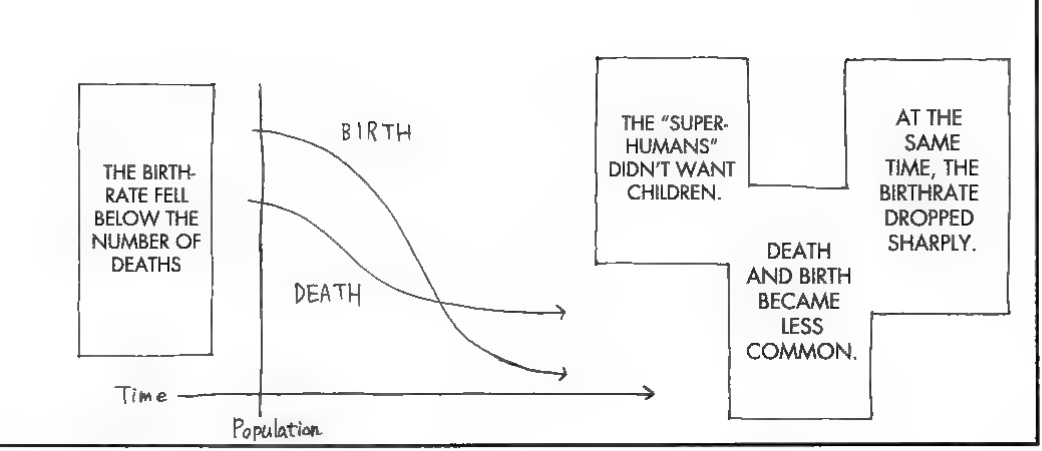
WHAT A STORY..
...CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT?
SIGH
はー
DUH
ほー
...
SURE.
IS BEER OKAY?
YES, SIR.
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.
AH! GET ME A DRINK.
YOU'RE STILL DRINKING? YOU JUST DRANK YESTERDAY.
...I'LL DRINK WITH YOU.
...
I FEEL LIKE I'M GOING CRAZY.
HOW CAN I NOT DRINK?
DO YOU WANT SOME-THING?

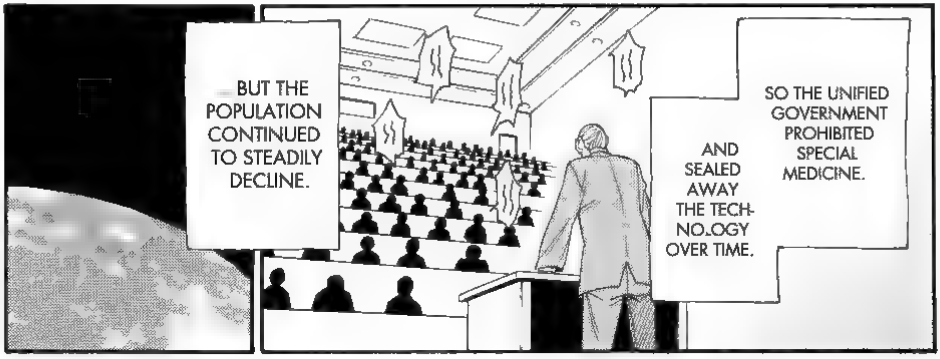
...
...
THAT'S YOUR TENTH ROUND.
ANOTHER ROUND.

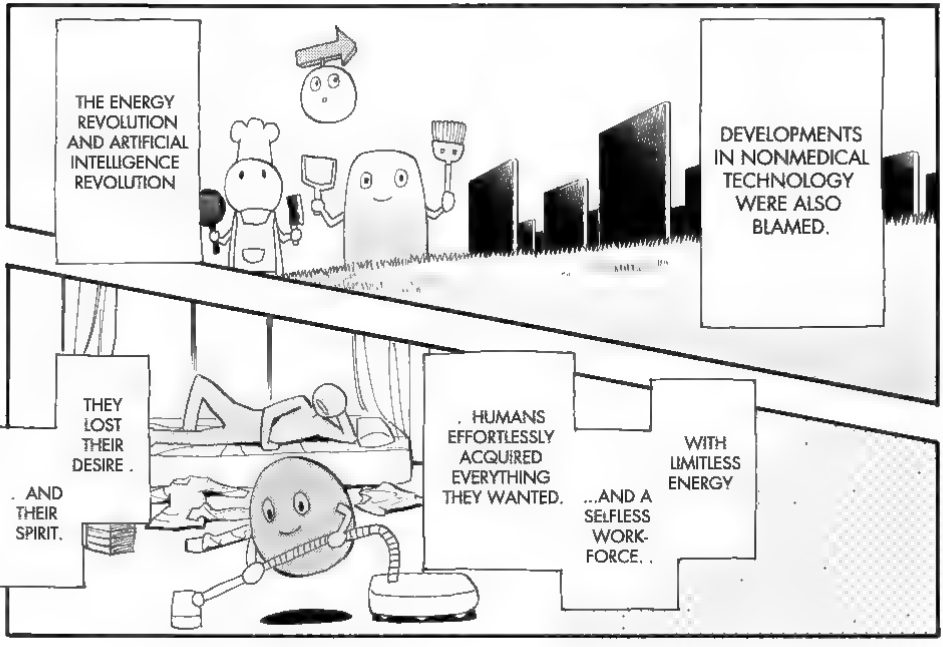

. .NEITHER OF US COULD GET DRUNK
THAT DAY, NO MATTER HOW MUCH WE DRANK...

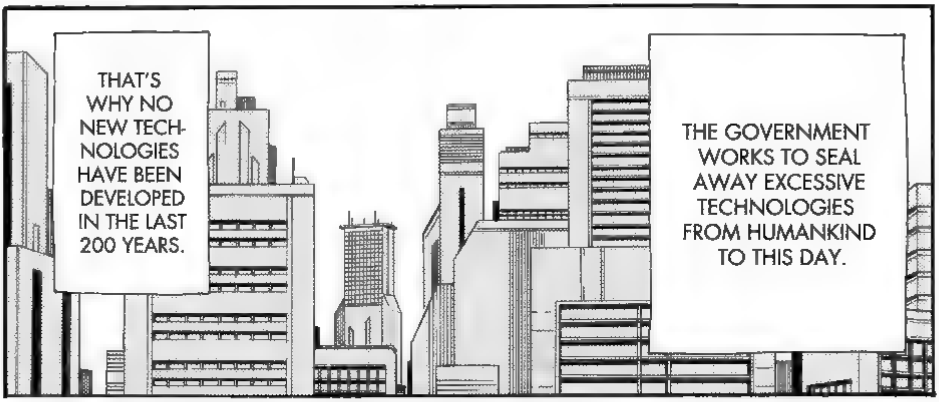

.. BUT RATHER THE EXCESSIVE ADVANCEMENT OF REGENERATIVE MEDICINE AND GENETIC ENGINEERING.
...WASN'T EXHAUSTION FROM WAR ..
ACCORDING TO TALIO, THE REASON FOR HUMANKIND'S DECLINE...

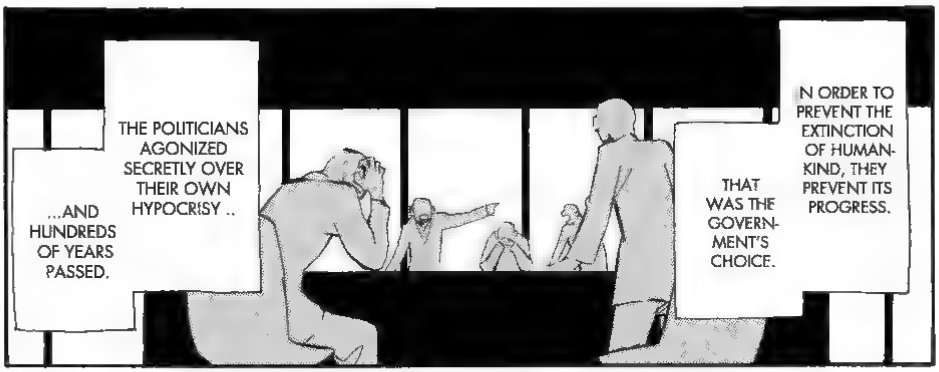

"SUPER-HUMANS."
THE WORLD WAS FULL OF THEM
IT SUCCESS-FULLY EXTENDED THE HUMAN LIFESPAN.
EVENTUALLY MEDICINE CONQUERED ALL ILLNESS AND EFFORTLESSLY GRANTED POWERFUL MUSCLES.

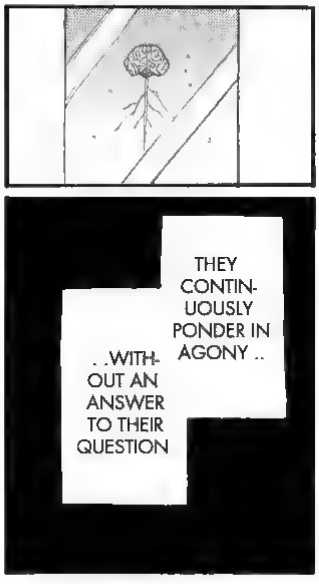

THE BIRTH-RATE FELL BELOW THE NUMBER OF DEATHS
BIRTH
DEATH
Time
Population
THE "SUPER-HUMANS" DIDN'T WANT CHILDREN.
AT THE SAME TIME, THE BIRTHRATE DROPPED SHARPLY.
DEATH AND BIRTH BECAME LESS COMMON.

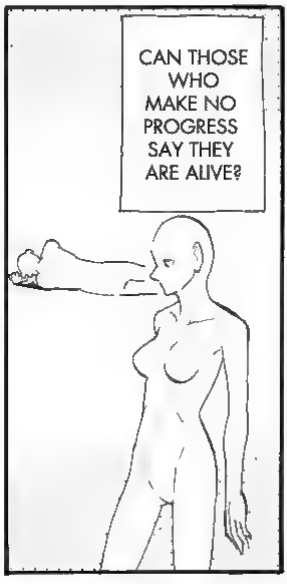

BUT THE POPULATION CONTINUED TO STEADILY DECLINE.
AND SEALED AWAY THE TECH-NO.OGY OVER TIME.
SO THE UNIFIED GOVERNMENT PROHIBITED SPECIAL MEDICINE.

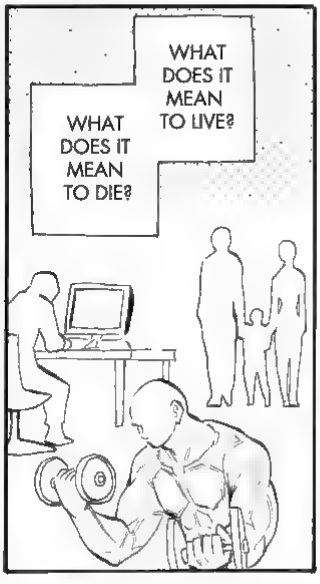

THE ENERGY REVOLUTION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE REVOLUTION
DEVELOPMENTS IN NONMEDICAL TECHNOLOGY WERE ALSO BLAMED.
. AND THEIR SPIRIT.
THEY LOST THEIR DESIRE .
. HUMANS EFFORTLESSLY ACQUIRED EVERYTHING THEY WANTED.
...AND A SELFLESS WORK-FORCE. .
WITH LIMITLESS ENERGY


THAT'S WHY NO NEW TECH-NOLOGIES HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED IN THE LAST 200 YEARS.
THE GOVERNMENT WORKS TO SEAL AWAY EXCESSIVE TECHNOLOGIES FROM HUMANKIND TO THIS DAY.


...AND HUNDREDS OF YEARS PASSED.
THE POLITICIANS AGONIZED SECRETLY OVER THEIR OWN HYPOCRISY ..
THAT WAS THE GOVERN-MENT'S CHOICE.
IN ORDER TO PREVENT THE EXTINCTION OF HUMAN-KIND, THEY PREVENT ITS PROGRESS.


. . .WITH-OUT AN ANSWER TO THEIR QUESTION
THEY CONTIN-UOUSLY PONDER IN AGONY ..

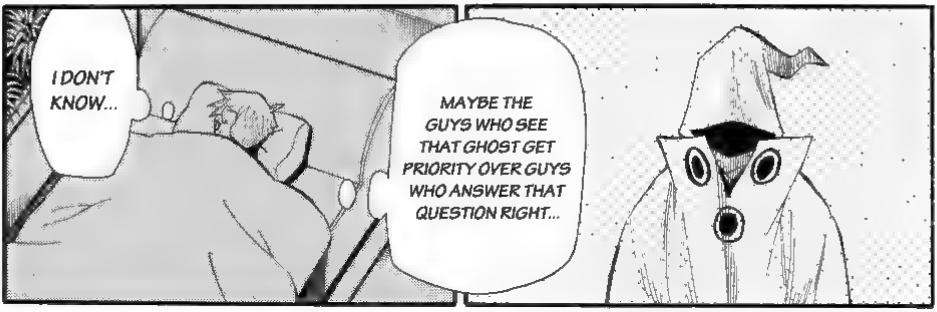

CAN THOSE WHO MAKE NO PROGRESS SAY THEY ARE ALIVE?

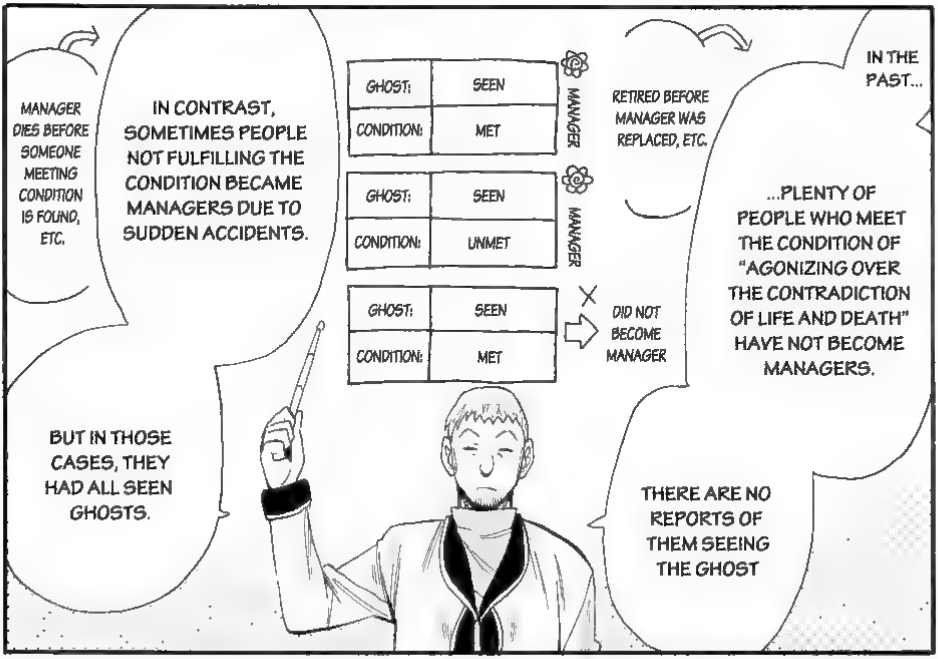

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE?
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DIE?

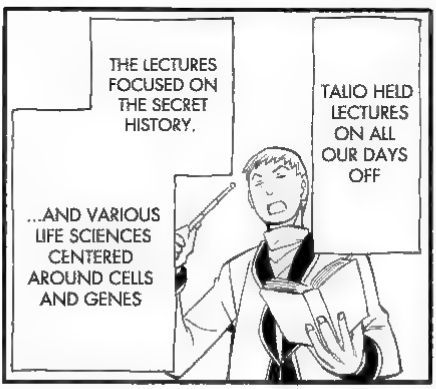
THE FIRST MANAGER OF "THE SLEEPING TOWER" WAS A TROUBLED MEMBER OF THE UNIFIED GOVERNMENT.
THOSE WERE THE CONDITIONS FOR BECOMING MANAGER OF "THE SLEEPING TOWER "
TO YOU WHO WILL SOME-DAY BECOME THE TOWER'S MANAGERS, I SAY...
I AM SPACIFICA.
...HUMANKIND'S EXPERIENCE OF DEATH.
DO NOT PER-VERT...

HUMANKIND WANTS TO LIVE ANYWAY.
WE REALIZED THE HYPOCRISY OF THE NON-LIVING LONG AGO.
WHETHER YOU'RE A GOD OR A DEMON, NON-HUMANS SHOULD STAY OUT OF THIS.
OUR SUFFERING IS OUR OWN.

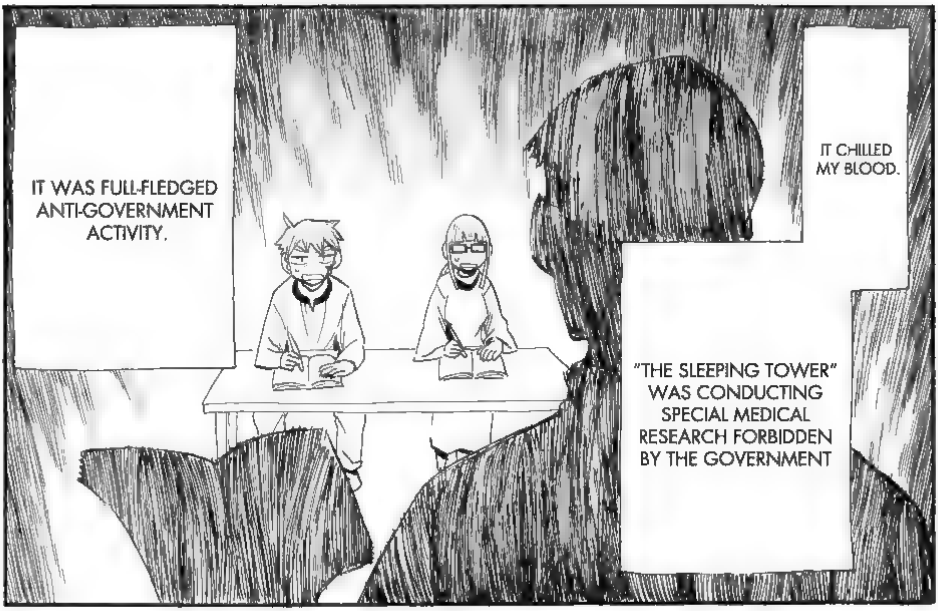
...WE'RE TOLD THAT'S WHAT THE FIRST MANAGER SAID TO THE GHOST
AND
YOU DON'T NEED TO ORDER ME NOT TO TALK
I COULDN'T TELL ANYONE ANYWAY
...WE DON'T MEET THE CONDITIONS FOR BECOMING MANAGER
...HUH?
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...
WE ANSWERED SO QUICKLY BACK THEN
SORRY FOR MANAGER
WE BELIEVE THEY'RE ALIVE.
YES!
DO YOU THINK THE NON-LIVING ARE ALIVE?

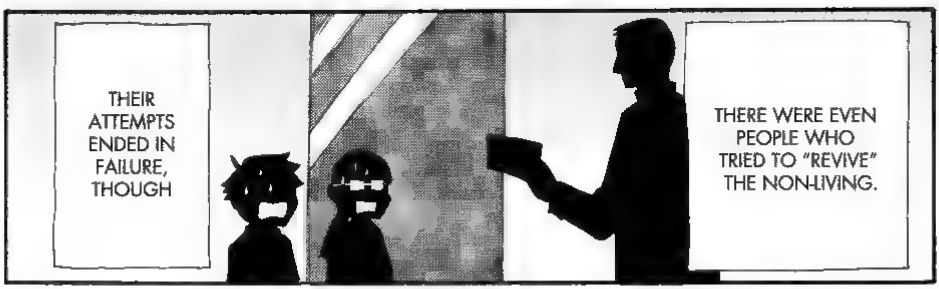

I DON'T KNOW...
MAYBE THE GUYS WHO SEE THAT GHOST GET PRIORITY OVER GUYS WHO ANSWER THAT QUESTION RIGHT...

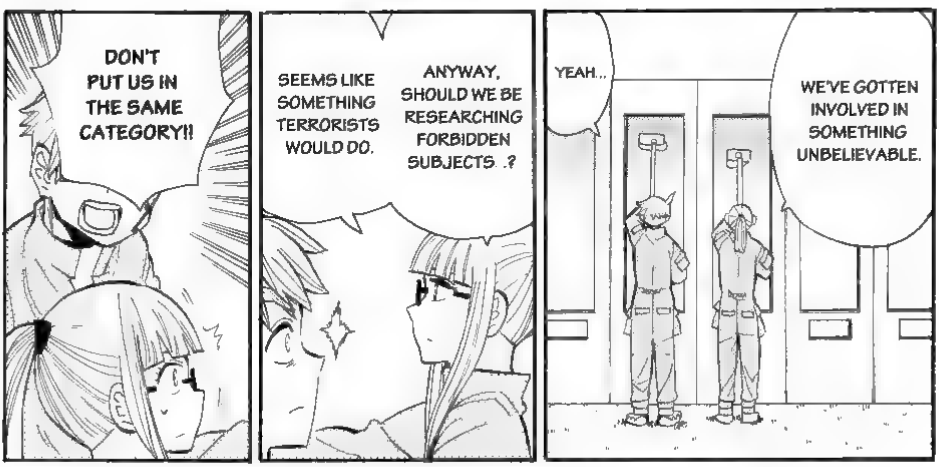

MANAGER DIES BEFORE SOMEONE MEETING CONDITION IS FOUND, ETC.
IN CONTRAST, SOMETIMES PEOPLE NOT FULFILLING THE CONDITION BECAME MANAGERS DUE TO SUDDEN ACCIDENTS.
GHOST: SEEN
CONDITION: MET
MANAGER
RETIRED BEFORE MANAGER WAS REPLACED, ETC.
GHOST: SEEN
CONDITION: UNMET
MANAGER
GHOST: SEEN
CONDITION: MET
DID NOT BECOME MANAGER
IN THE PAST...
...PLENTY OF PEOPLE WHO MEET THE CONDITION OF "AGONIZING OVER THE CONTRADICTION OF LIFE AND DEATH" HAVE NOT BECOME MANAGERS.
BUT IN THOSE CASES, THEY HAD ALL SEEN GHOSTS.
THERE ARE NO REPORTS OF THEM SEEING THE GHOST


THE LECTURES FOCUSED ON THE SECRET HISTORY.
TALIO HELD LECTURES ON ALL OUR DAYS OFF
...AND VARIOUS LIFE SCIENCES CENTERED AROUND CELLS AND GENES

BECAUSE THIS SOMETIMES HAPPENS, THOSE WHO SEE GHOSTS RECEIVE THE MANAGERIAL CANDIDATE LECTURE.
HEY, YOU. DON'T LOOK SO IRRITATED.

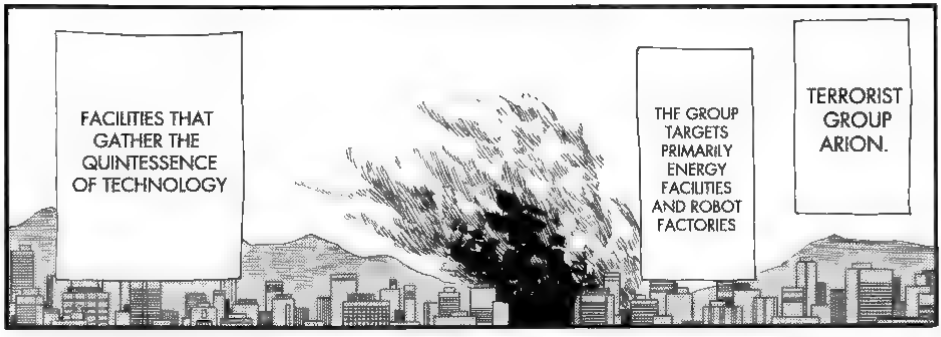

IT WAS FULL-FLEDGED ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTIVITY.
IT CHILLED MY BLOOD.
"THE SLEEPING TOWER" WAS CONDUCTING SPECIAL MEDICAL RESEARCH FORBIDDEN BY THE GOVERNMENT


THEIR ATTEMPTS ENDED IN FAILURE, THOUGH
THERE WERE EVEN PEOPLE WHO TRIED TO "REVIVE" THE NON-LIVING.

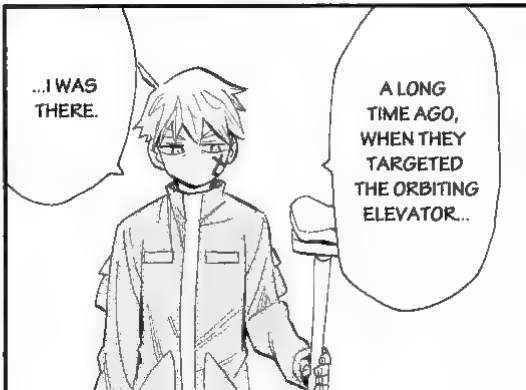

DON'T PUT US IN THE SAME CATEGORY!!
SEEMS LIKE SOMETHING TERRORISTS WOULD DO.
ANYWAY, SHOULD WE BE RESEARCHING FORBIDDEN SUBJECTS...?
YEAH...
WE'VE GOTTEN INVOLVED IN SOMETHING UNBELIEVABLE.

THE TERROR-ISTS ARE AGAINST TECH-NOLOGY!
THEY WANT TO KILL HUMAN INTELLI-GENCE!!
IT'S THE COMPLETE OPPOSITE OF WHAT THE MANAGERS HAVE BEEN DOING!!

DO YOU HAVE SOME KIND OF GRIEVANCE WITH THEM?
YOU CHANGE THE CHANNEL WHEN NEWS ABOUT TERRORISTS COMES ON.
SORRY..
...
OH-

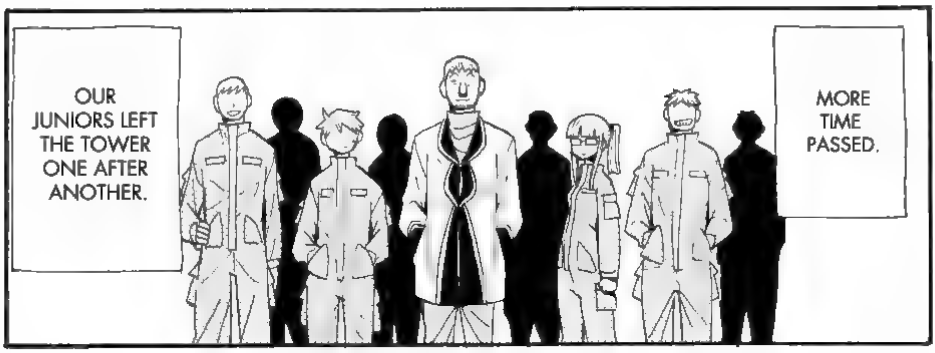

FACILITIES THAT GATHER THE QUINTESSENCE OF TECHNOLOGY
THE GROUP TARGETS PRIMARILY ENERGY FACILITIES AND ROBOT FACTORIES
TERRORIST GROUP ARION.

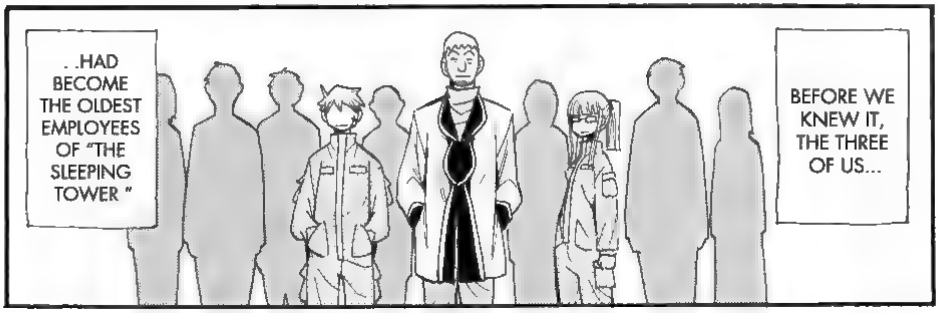
...UNCLE AIZEN AND THE OTHERS.
THEY KILLED...

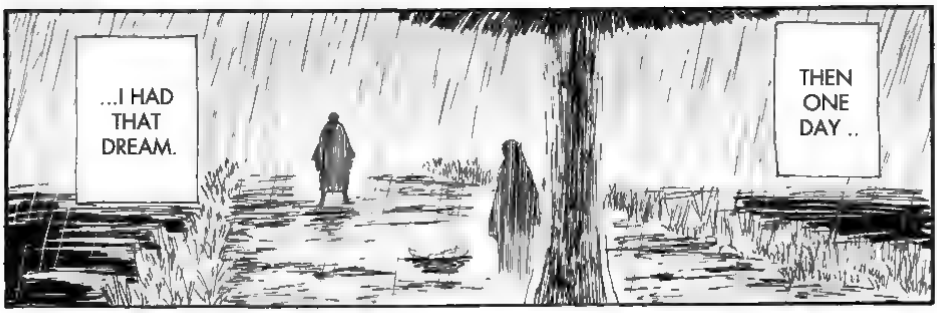

...I WAS THERE.
A LONG TIME AGO, WHEN THEY TARGETED THE ORBITING ELEVATOR...

I DISLIKE THE ACT OF RESEARCH ITSELF.
...YEAH
IS THAT HOW YOU GOT YOUR ARTIFICIAL ARM AND LEG?
...
...WERE ATTACHED TO MY BODY AFTER MY FATHER TORE OFF MY OLD LIMBS.
MY FATHER WAS AN ARTIFICIAL LIMB RESEARCHER.
MY ARTIFICIAL LIMBS MIRRORING YOURS...
IN THE END, HE FAILED TO TAKE HIS OWN LIFE AND BECAME A NON-LIVING.
MY FATHER HAD GONE CRAZY WHEN HIS RESEARCH STOPPED PROGRESSING.
...I DIDN'T KNOW.
YOU TOLD ME ABOUT YOUR PAST ..
I RETURNED THE FAVOR.
...I DIDN'T END UP DOING IT, THOUGH
I CAME HERE TO BREAK OPEN MY FATHER'S CASE.

EVEN THOUGH IT'S BEEN TEN YEARS SINCE WE MET
IT'S THE FIRST TIME WE'VE TALKED ABOUT OUR PASTS...
...OR FEEL-INGS.
I THOUGHT THE SAME THING.
DON'T YOU FEEL LIKE WE'RE FINALLY FRIENDS?
LIKE, "FINALLY!"


OUR JUNIORS LEFT THE TOWER ONE AFTER ANOTHER.
MORE TIME PASSED.


. .HAD BECOME THE OLDEST EMPLOYEES OF "THE SLEEPING TOWER "
BEFORE WE KNEW IT, THE THREE OF US...

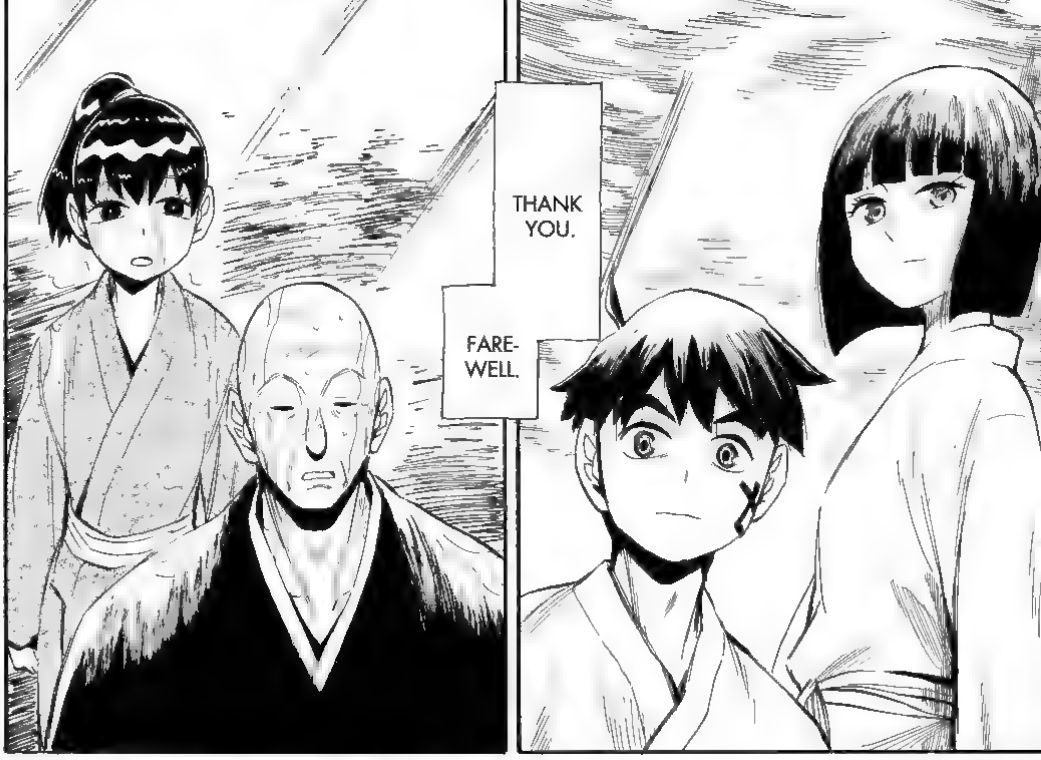

...I HAD THAT DREAM.
THEN ONE DAY ..

AND THE DREAM CON- TINUED

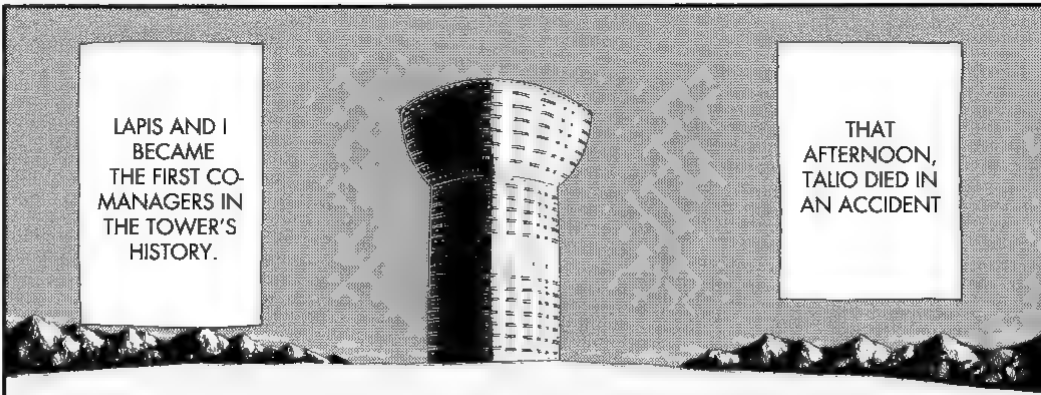
THE RAIN DREAM

IT'S THE LAST DRINK OF MY LIFE.
FINE. HOUTAROU...
ARE YOU SATISFIED NOW?
LET'S GO.

...WERE YOU WAITING? I TOLD YOU TO GO ON AHEAD.
THERE'S SOMETHING WE HAVE TO DO.
I THOUGHT WE SHOULD GO TOGETHER, SO I CAME BACK.
PRIEST!

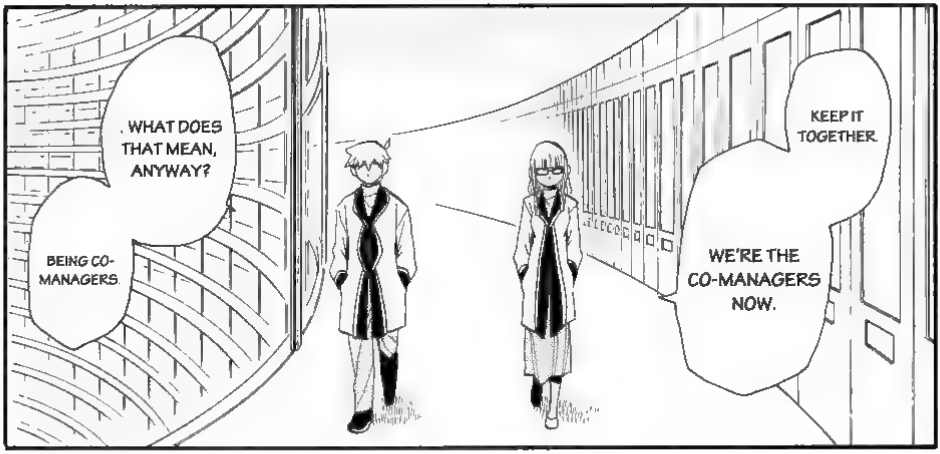

THANK YOU.
FARE-WELL.

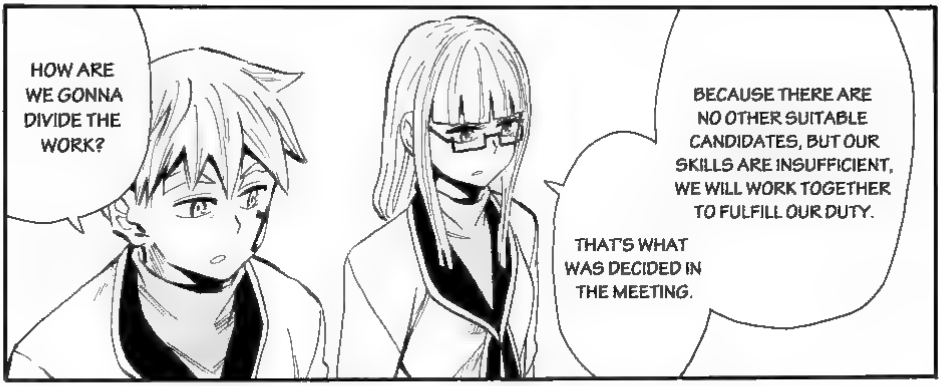
.REPAY THIS DEBT
HRM.
I WILL.


LAPIS AND I BECAME THE FIRST CO-MANAGERS IN THE TOWER'S HISTORY.
THAT AFTERNOON, TALIO DIED IN AN ACCIDENT

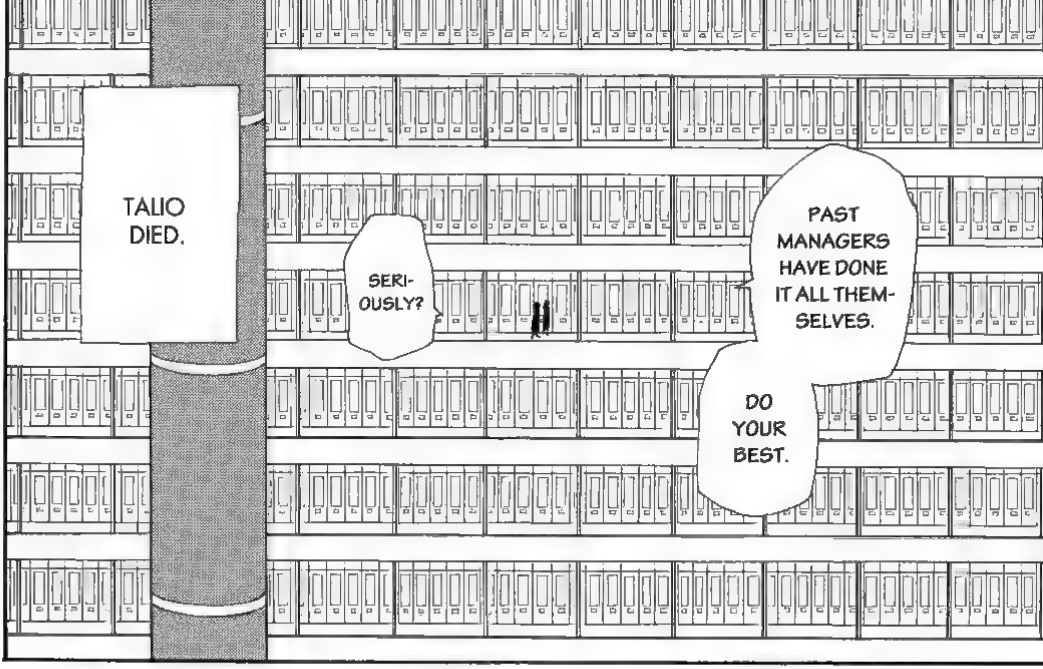
CIRCLE 26
LAFALLE 5

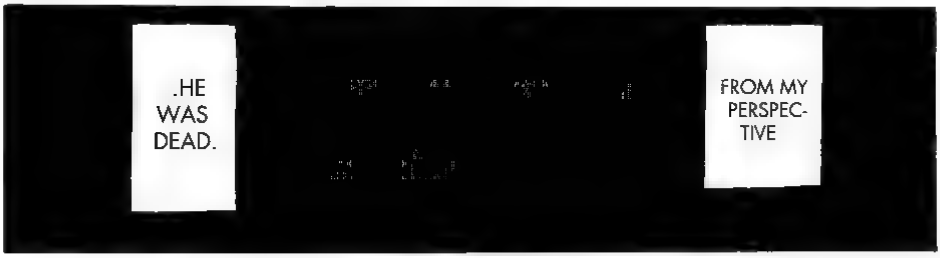
HE WAS IN A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT WHILE IN THE CITY.
TALIO DIED.
WHEN WE DIE...
...WE END UP HERE, TOO.
NO, NO. TALIO'S NOT DEAD.
HE'S JUST ONE OF THE NON-LIVING NOW.
OH... RIGHT.

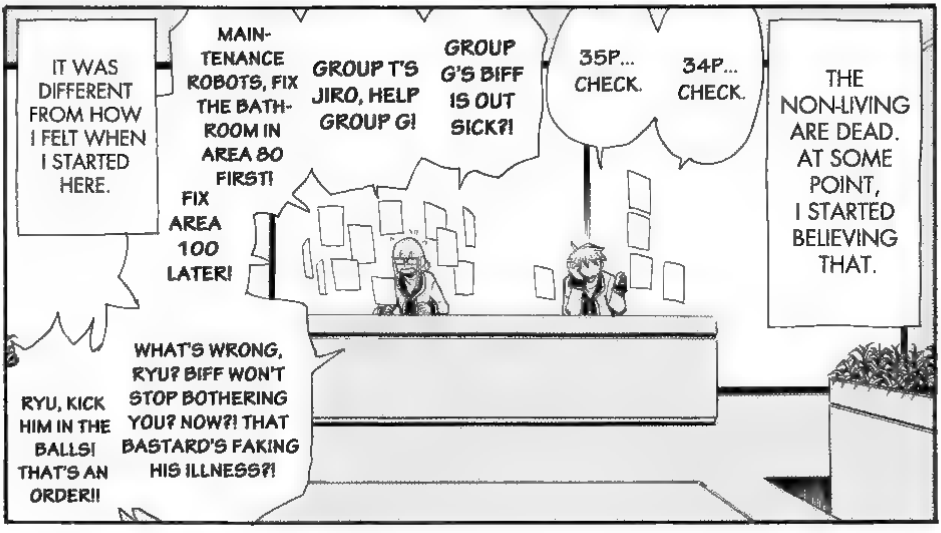

. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, ANYWAY?
BEING CO-MANAGERS.
KEEP IT TOGETHER.
WE'RE THE CO-MANAGERS NOW.


HOW ARE WE GONNA DIVIDE THE WORK?
BECAUSE THERE ARE NO OTHER SUITABLE CANDIDATES, BUT OUR SKILLS ARE INSUFFICIENT, WE WILL WORK TOGETHER TO FULFILL OUR DUTY.
THAT'S WHAT WAS DECIDED IN THE MEETING.

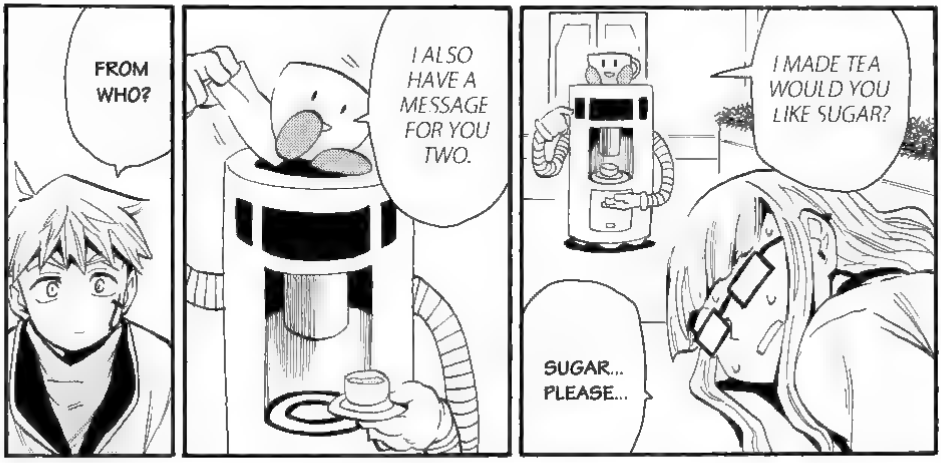
HEY!! THERE ARE JUST OVER THREE THOUSAND PEOPLE AND ROBOTS, BUT THERE ARE A HUNDRED MILLION NON-LIVING!! I CAN'T HANDLE THAT MYSELF!
YOU NOTICED?
. . .
YOU CAN MANAGE THE NON-LIVING.
WELL... I'LL MANAGE THE EMPLOYEES AND ROBOTS.
SURE.
GOT IT.


TALIO DIED.
SERI-OUSLY?
PAST MANAGERS HAVE DONE IT ALL THEM-SELVES.
DO YOUR BEST.


.HE WAS DEAD.
FROM MY PERSPEC-TIVE


IT WAS DIFFERENT FROM HOW I FELT WHEN I STARTED HERE.
MAIN-TENANCE ROBOTS, FIX THE BATH-ROOM IN AREA 80 FIRST!
GROUP T'S JIRO, HELP GROUP G!
GROUP G'S BIFF IS OUT SICK?!
35P... CHECK.
34P... CHECK.
THE NON-LIVING ARE DEAD. AT SOME POINT, I STARTED BELIEVING THAT.
FIX AREA 100 LATER!
RYU, KICK HIM IN THE BALLS! THAT'S AN ORDER!!
WHAT'S WRONG, RYU? BIFF WON'T STOP BOTHERING YOU? NOW?! THAT BASTARD'S FAKING HIS ILLNESS?!

277P... 276P... CHECK.
THAT SEEMS EASY..
IT IS EASY.
BUT THERE'S NO END TO IT.
つってもキリないけど
COME TO THINK OF IT, THE NON-LIVING CAN MOSTLY BE MANAGED AUTOMATICALLY...
PEOPLE AND ROBOTS ARE TOUGHER SINCE THEY CHANGE EVERY DAY.

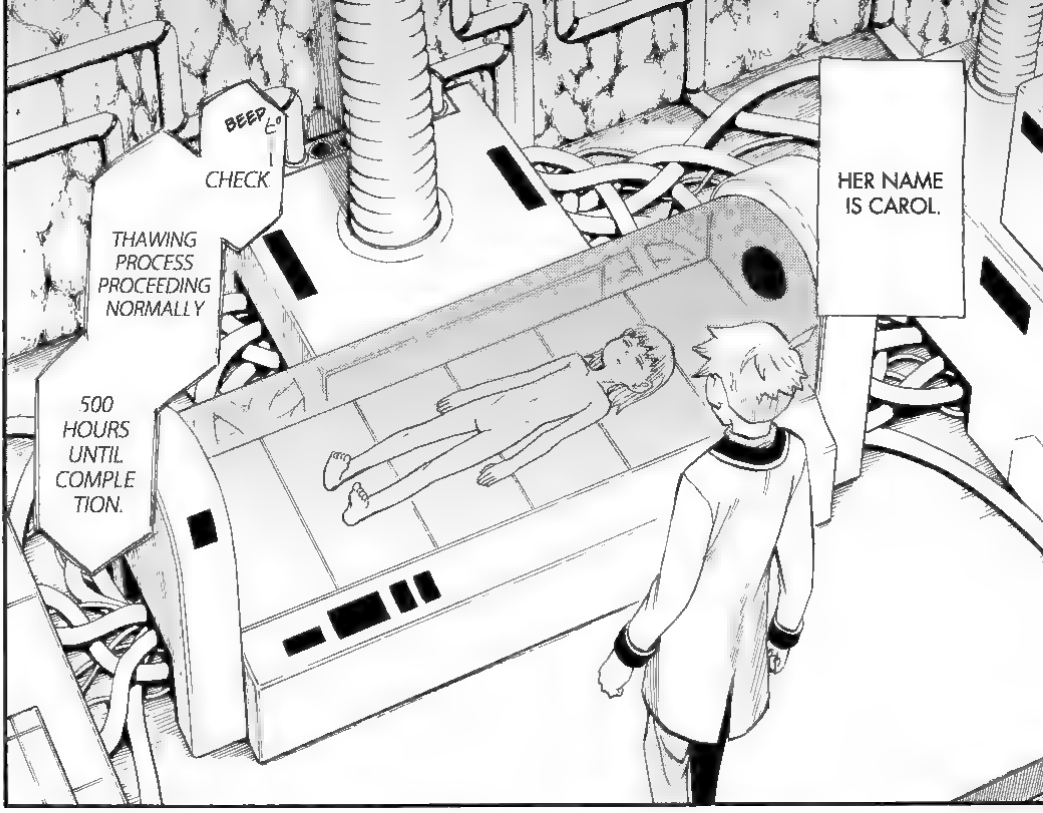

FROM WHO?
I ALSO HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU TWO.
I MADE TEA WOULD YOU LIKE SUGAR?
SUGAR... PLEASE...

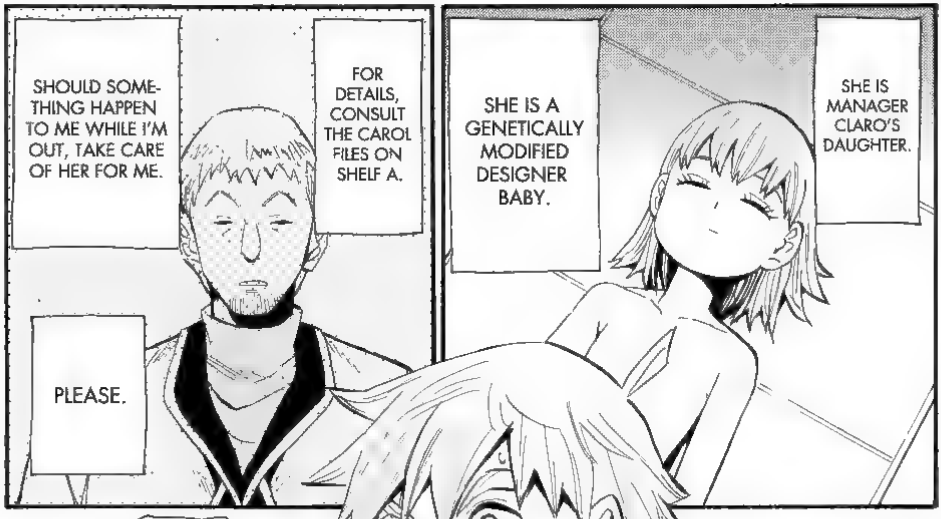
?!
FROM TALIO ?!
FROM THE PREVIOUS MANAGER TALIO SAMA
THE MANAGER PROHIBITED ME FROM SCANNING ITS CONTENTS SO THEY ARE UNKNOWN TO ME.

...
...
IT'S A HAND-WRITTEN NOTE...
HEY...
ARE YOU SERI-OUS ..?
I RECEIVED IT THE DAY BEFORE TALIO SAMA LEFT FOR THE CITY.
WHEN DID HE GIVE THIS TO YOU...?!
URGENT.
I'LL GO CHECK IT OUT FIRST!
LAPIS, YOU COME LATER!
IT'S BEEN A WEEK...
DASH

CODE CLARO!!
ENTER CODE CLARO IN THE HOT WATER PANEL IN ROOM 201.
HEAD TO AREA SPACIFICA AT ONCE.
HAH
HAH
IN THE ROOM THAT APPEARS...
...
RUMBLE
ゴゴゴ...

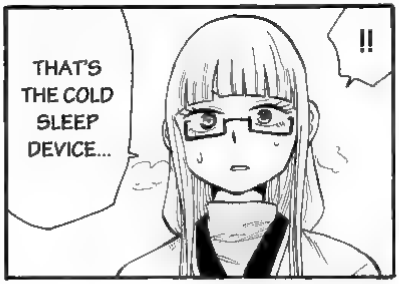
...THAT IS IN THE PROCESS OF THAWING.
.. YOU WILL FIND A COLD SLEEP DEVICE...
PLEASE CONFIRM THE DEVICE IS OPERATING NORMALLY.
...
ゴクリ
GULP


BEEP
CHECK
THAWING PROCESS PROCEEDING NORMALLY
500 HOURS UNTIL COMPLE TION.
HER NAME IS CAROL.

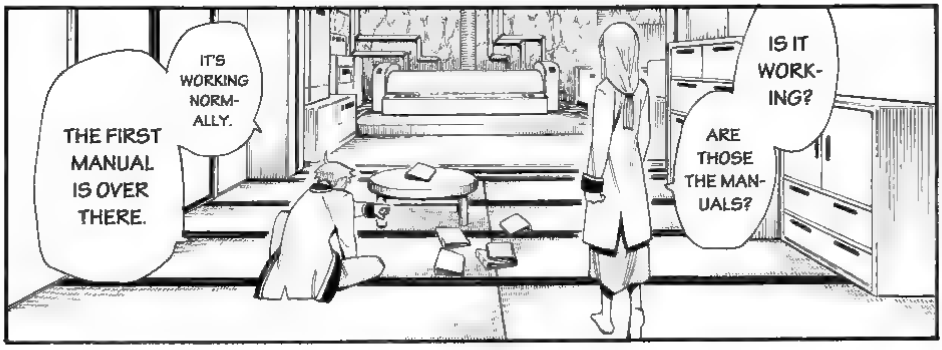

SHOULD SOME-THING HAPPEN TO ME WHILE I'M OUT, TAKE CARE OF HER FOR ME.
FOR DETAILS, CONSULT THE CAROL FILES ON SHELF A.
PLEASE.
SHE IS A GENETICALLY MODIFIED DESIGNER BABY.
SHE IS MANAGER CLARO'S DAUGHTER.

THEY'RE BOTH TECHNOLOGIES PROHIBITED BY THE GOVERNMENT...!!
COLD SLEEP. !!
DESIGNER BABY...!!

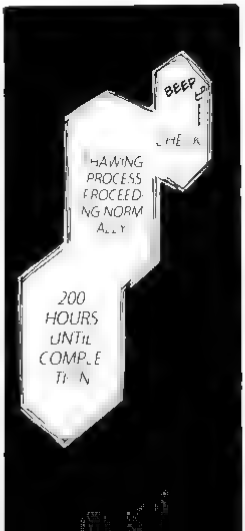
LAPIS..

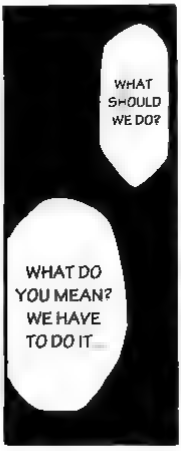

!!
THAT'S THE COLD SLEEP DEVICE...

CLICK
LA-FALLE!


IS IT WORK-ING?
ARE THOSE THE MAN-UALS?
IT'S WORKING NORM-ALLY.
THE FIRST MANUAL IS OVER THERE.

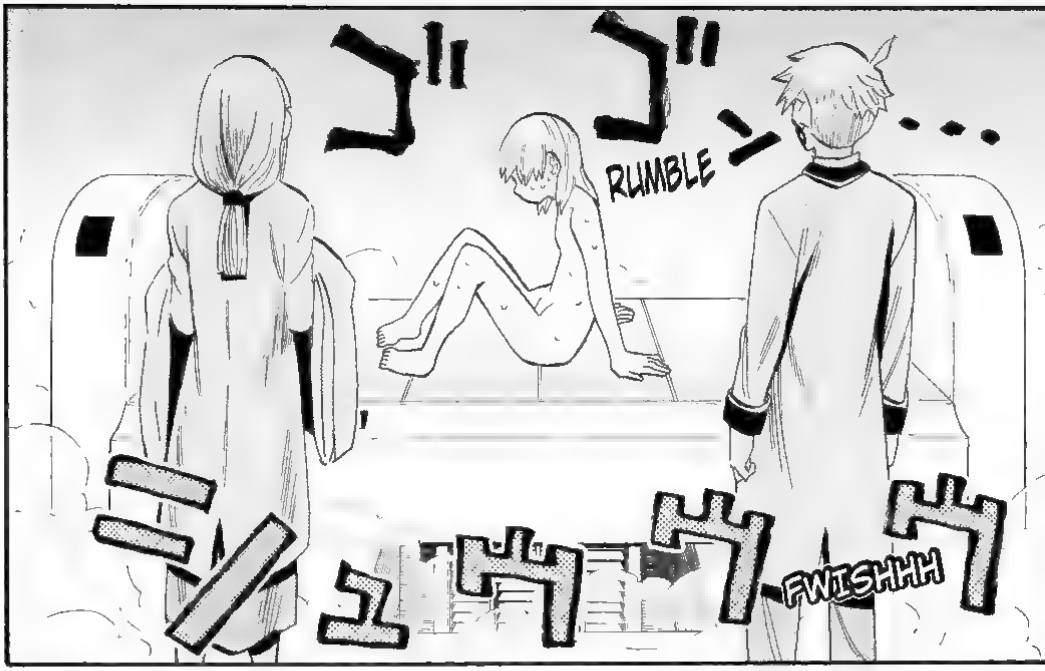
BEEP

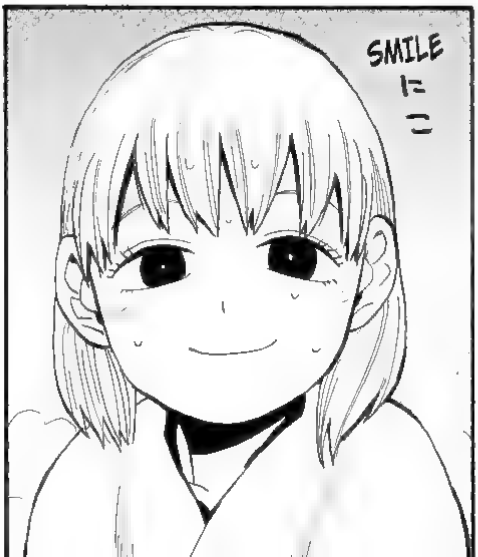

BEEP
HAVING PROCESS PROCEED NG NORM ALLY
200 HOURS UNTIL COMPLE TION


WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WE HAVE TO DO IT...

...

OPENING HATCH
3
2
1
BODY TEMPERATURE NORMAL
PULSE NORMAL
BRAINWAVES NORMAL
20 SECONDS REMAINING


RUMBLE
FWISHHH


SMILE

CAN—
RUSTLE
GOOD MORNING, CAROL.
CAN YOU STAND?
HOW DO YOU FEEL?
...

AHH!
STAGGER
OH. .
...RIFFLE AND UNCLE AIZEN SAID THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE BORN TO REPAY A DEBT TO ME.
I KNEW IT WAS JUST MY FANTASY, BUT...
"MY LIFE EXISTS..."
"...FOR THIS CHILD."
...FELT THE SAME WAY.
IN THIS MOMENT. .
...I THINK I... AND PROBABLY LAPIS, TOO...

HE ASKED US TO LOOK AFTER YOU.
I SEE..
CLA... YOUR FATHER IS DOING SOMETHING FAR AWAY.
WHERE'S DAD...?
NICE TO MEET YOU.
I'M CAROL.
I'M LAFALLE.
NICE TO MEET YOU
LOVESTRUCK
I'M LAPIS.
NICE TO MEET YOU.
TALIO TOOK OVER RESEARCHING THE MEDICINE AFTER MANAGER CLARO, AND TALIO COMPLETED THE CURE.
CAROL WAS PUT INTO COLD SLEEP TO WAIT FOR THE CURE FOR A CERTAIN DISEASE TO BE COMPLETED.

...OUT OF CONSIDERATION FOR US?
DID TALIO KEEP IT SECRET UNTIL NOW...
.. TALIO GOT INTO AN ACCIDENT
DURING THE THREE-MONTH THAWING PROCESS.
THIS GIRL?
RAISE HER HIMSELF?
WHAT DID HE INTEND TO DO, ANYWAY?
IT'S TOO LATE NOW!!
DID HE NOT WANT US TO GET INVOLVED?
WAS HE GOING TO RAISE HER ALONE, HIDDEN FROM SOCIETY?
HOW?!
THIS MASS OF FEDERALLY PROHIBITED TECHNOLOGY.
THIS DESIGNER BABY.

...
LAFALLE, A WORD.
NOT ONLY DID HE GENETICALLY MODIFY HIS DAUGHTER, BUT HE MEANT TO CONCEA. HER FROM THE WORLD
AND MANAGER CLARO IS AN INSANE MAD SCIENTIST!
NO, YOU HAVE TO KEEP TAKING IT EVERY DAY FOR ANOTHER WEEK
SORRY.
IS THIS ALL THE MEDICINE?
WHAT? NO FAIR.
WHAT'S NOT FAIR?
IT'LL SEEM SUSPICIOUS IF BOTH THE MANAGERS ARE MISSING
YOU GO BACK UP.
I'M GOING TO STAY HERE A WHILE TO LOOK AFTER HER.
MARRIED--!
WHAT?
YEAH .
IT'D BE QUICKER FOR US TO GET MARRIED...
AND.
A FAMILY REGISTER?
ALSO, WHEN YOU'RE UPSTAIRS, LOOK UP HOW TO ACQUIRE A FAMILY REGISTER.

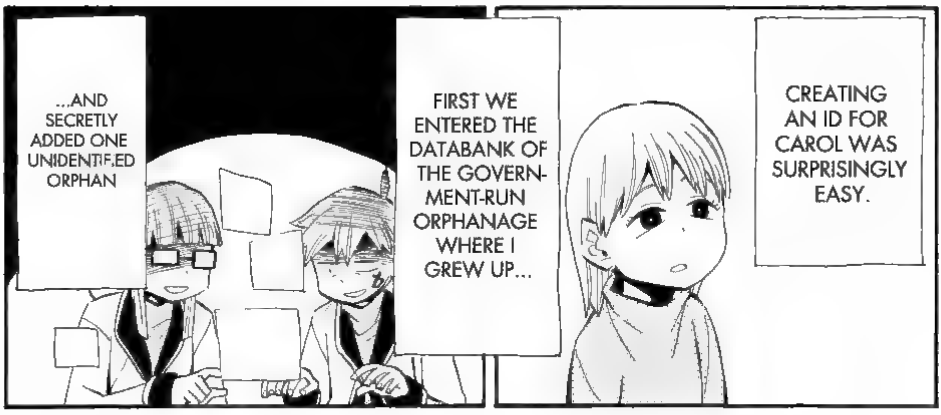
WE'RE GETTING MARRIED.
LAFALLE.
GRAB
WHAT?!
...
WE'RE GOING TO GET MARRIED AND ADOPT CAROL.
I WANT TO GIVE THAT GIRL A PROPER PLACE TO LIVE.
HELP ME.

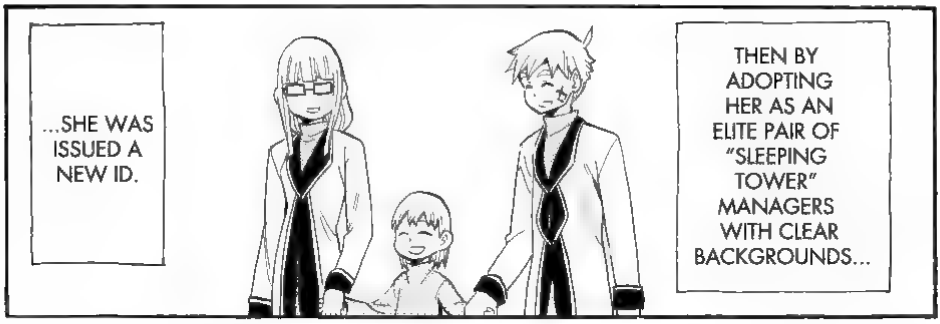
...I DON'T WANT TO HIDE HER FROM THE WORLD AND MAKE HER LIVE IN THIS BASEMENT HER WHOLE LIFE.
JUST BECAUSE SHE'S A DESIGNER BABY PROHIBITED BY THE GOVERNMENT...

HELP ME.
PLEASE...!!
I DON'T WANT TO SACRIFICE HER LIFE TO HER FATHER'S HUMAN EXPERIMENTS.

CAROL IS OUR DAUGHTER.
FINE. LET'S GET MARRIED.
...A FAMILY.
STARTING TODAY, WE ARE...

WHAT?!
WE'RE MARRIED.
EMPLOYEES
WE'RE MARRIED NOW.
WELL... A LOT HAPPENED.
どよどよ
CHATTER
SHE GREW ON YOU QUICK!!
A BUNCH OF STUFF HAPPENED, AND WE ADOPTED A DAUGHTER.
YOUR DAUGHTER IS HUGE!
MOM.
THIS IS OUR DAUGHTER CAROL.
I WONDER WHO PROPOSED?
BUT THEY'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER A LONG TIME...
I DIDN'T THINK THOSE TWO HAD THAT SORT OF RELATIONSHIP...
HOW OLD IS YOUR DAUGHTER?
NO ONE GETS MARRIED ANYMORE
ざわざわ
CHATTER
YOU'RE RIGHT
EVERYONE'S MORE SURPRISED THAN I EXPECTED


CREATING AN ID FOR CAROL WAS SURPRISINGLY EASY.
FIRST WE ENTERED THE DATABANK OF THE GOVERN-MENT-RUN ORPHANAGE WHERE I GREW UP...
...AND SECRETLY ADDED ONE UNIDENTIFIED ORPHAN


THEN BY ADOPTING HER AS AN ELITE PAIR OF "SLEEPING TOWER" MANAGERS WITH CLEAR BACKGROUNDS...
...SHE WAS ISSUED A NEW ID.

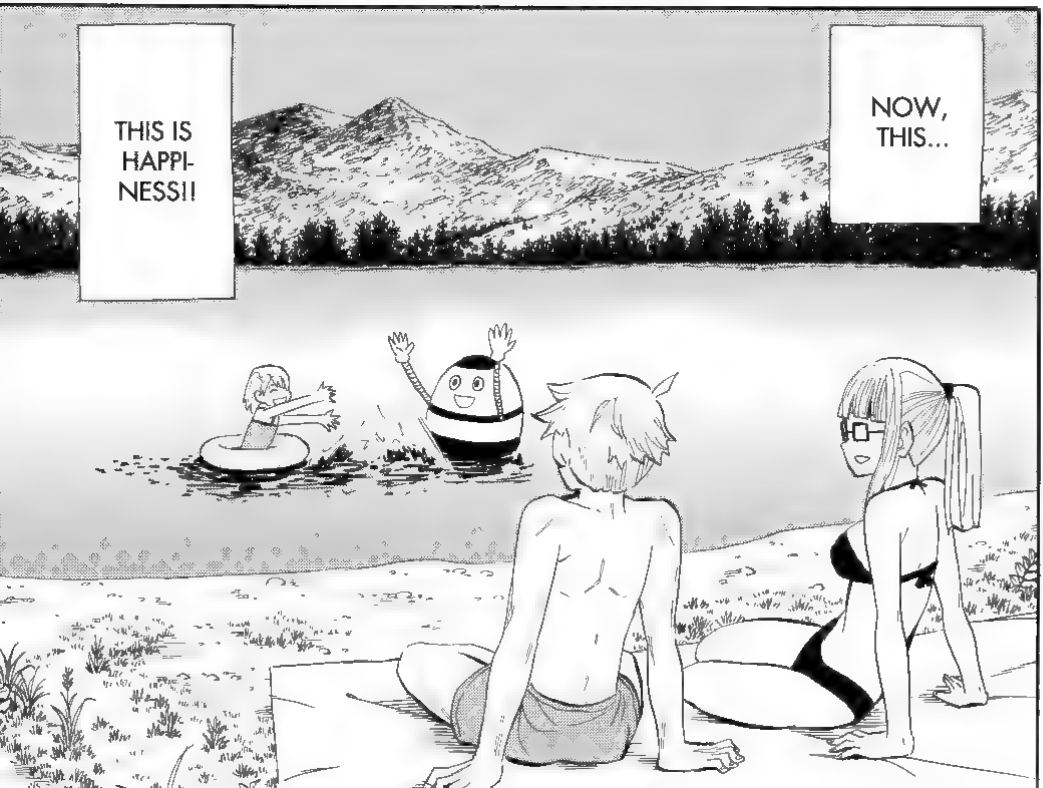
IT WAS A PIECE OF CAKE
AND IT SURE IS HANDY HAVING AUTHORITY

THEN WE BEGAN CREATING A FAMILY.
THE THREE OF US STARTED LIVING TOGETHER.

ARE YOU COMING BACK? WILL YOU COME BACK?
BE NICE TO TAPPER.
TAPPER
WE'RE GOING TO WORK NOW.
PROMISE.
YOU'D BETTER COME BACK.
WE'LL BE BACK FOR LUNCH. LET'S EAT TOGETHER, OKAY?
OF COURSE.
ME, TOO.
I WANT TO QUIT WORKING.
AND STAY AT HOME ALL THE TIME.
...BUT SHE WAS UNUSUALLY LONELY, SO WE WENT THROUGH THIS EVERY MORNING.
CAROL GREW ON US QUICKLY...

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO NEXT WEEKEND?
I'M AFRAID OF THE CITY. WHAT ABOUT THE LAKE TO THE WEST?
THAT SOUNDS GREAT! WE'D BETTER GET SWIMSUITS.
SHOULD WE GO OUT?

GOTTA WORK.


THIS IS HAPPI-NESS!!
NOW, THIS...

I HAVE NOTHING BUT GRATITUDE FOR MANAGER CLARO AND TALIO.
NO... MY HANDS NATURALLY CAME TOGETHER.
THEY BROUGHT US TO CAROL.
YOU'RE, WHAT.. A BUDDHIST?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
...
HE EXPERI-MENTED ON HIS DAUGHTER.
HE'S JUST LIKE MY OWN FATHER.
..I'M NOT GRATEFUL TO MANAGER CLARO.
I THINK MANAGER CLARO WANTED TO GIVE CAROL POWER.
I FEEL LIKE I UNDER-STAND NOW
TALIO CREATED A MEDICINE TO SUPPRESS THAT.
HOWEVER, SHE FELL ILL. HER CELLS WERE DIVIDING TOO MUCH .. HER HEALING POWERS WERE OUT OF CONTROL.
INTELLIGENCE... STRENGTH... RESILIENCE .. HE WANTED TO MAKE HER...
.. ONE THE "SUPER-HUMANS" OF OLD.

MANAGER CLARO GAVE HER TOO MUCH POWER.
WHAT HE PROBABLY WANTED. .
...WAS TO GIVE HUMAN-KIND THE STRENGTH TO WALK AGAIN.
I'VE BEEN DOING SOME RESEARCH LATELY.
ABOUT WHAT?
!
THE TERRORIST GROUP ARION AND ITS RELATION-SHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT
THE RELATION-SHIP OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE SLEEPING TOWER.
RELA-TION-SHIP ?
NEXT WEEK YOU'RE GOING INTO THE CITY FOR WORK, RIGHT?
...BE CAREFUL.
MOM, I HAVE TO PEE.
.. BE CAREFUL? WHAT ARE YOU--

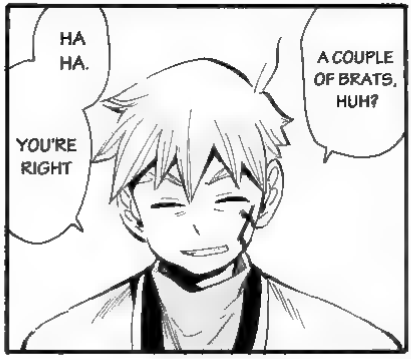
...TALIO'S ACCIDENT...
MAY-BE...
WHAT A COINCI-DENCE. I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE I LEFT THE FACILITY.
HEY, LA-FALLE. LONG TIME, NO SEE.
I HEARD YOU BECAME THE MANAGER OF THAT "TOMB."
...WASN'T AN ORDINARY ACCIDENT.

CIRCLE 27
LAFALLE 6

WHAT A COINCI-DENCE.
HEY, LAFALLE.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU SINCE I LEFT THE FACILITY.
I HEARD YOU'RE THE MANAGER OF THE "TOMB" NOW.
ASH...
ASH, IS THAT YOU?
STEP
"WE"?
...
THE NON-LIVING MANAGEMENT CENTER. THAT'S WHAT WE CALL IT.
"TOMB"?

...

YOU'VE...
...GOTTEN TALLER.


A COUPLE OF BRATS, HUH?
HA HA.
YOU'RE RIGHT

QUIT PLAYING THE OLDER BROTHER.
WE'RE JUST A PAIR OF BRATS A COUPLE YEARS APART FROM THE SAME FACILITY.

...
YOU SHOULD QUIT
BEING A TERRORIST, I MEAN.

...
HEH...

...
HA HA...

YOU KNOW?
I GUESS... I CAN JUST TELL.
HOW--?
SIGH
FOR YOUR OWN SAKE.
WASH YOUR HANDS OF THEM, ASH.
IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO START OVER.
...AH!
CLAP
DON'T TELL ME WHAT TO--!
I TOLD YOU TO QUIT PLAYING THE OLDER BROTHER!
SHOVE

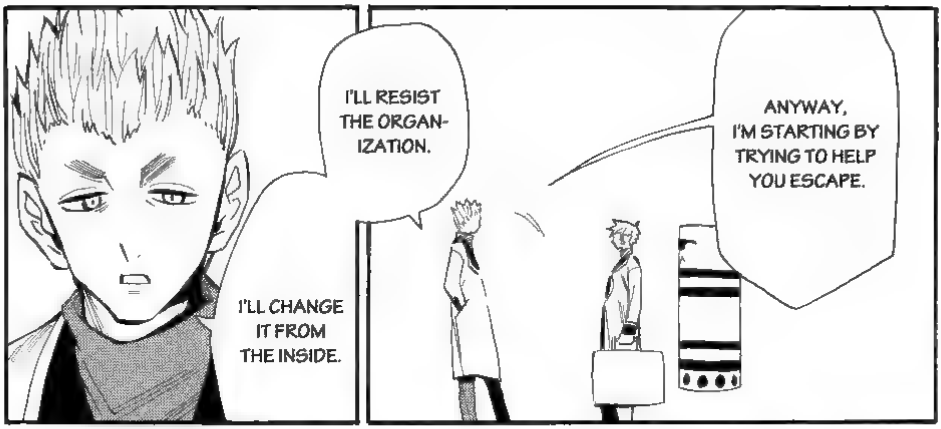
...
I'VE ALWAYS HAD A SHORT FUSE.
CALM DOWN...
MUTTER MUTTER
...
...
IT WASN'T A COINCIDENCE THAT WE MET HERE.
MY JOB IS TO STOP THE MANAGER OF THE "TOMB."
MUMBLE
. LISTEN TO ME.
MUMBLE MUMBLE
...
WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS?
ALL IN ORDER TO KILL YOU.
MAKE YOUR GUARD ROBOT STAND BETWEEN YOU AND THE STREET
IN A FEW MINUTES..
MUMBLE
. AN A.I -DRIVEN VEHICLE WILL MAL-FUNCTION AND COME DRIVING THROUGH HERE.

I FEEL THAT THE ORGAN-IZATION IS HYPO-CRITICAL.
I JOINED ARION BECAUSE I SYMPATHIZED WITH THEIR ANTI-TECHNOLOGY PRINCIPLES.
BUT ARION ITSELF IS CONDUCTING SECRET RESEARCH.
RESEARCH..? WHAT KIND OF..

BLACK HOLE BOMBS

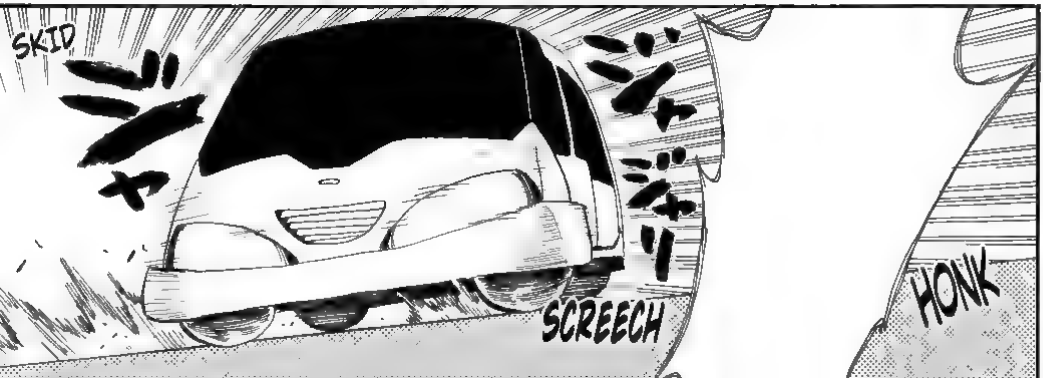
IT'S THE SORT OF TABOO ARION SHOULD WORK ON OVERTHROWING.
BUT ONE MISSED STEP, AND THEIR RIDICULOUS RESEARCH COULD OBLITERATE THE ENTIRE WORLD.
I BELIEVE HUMANITY SHOULD NEVER ENTER THAT KIND OF TERRITORY.

CIVILIZATION CAN RETURN TO SQUARE ONE.


I'LL RESIST THE ORGAN-IZATION.
I'LL CHANGE IT FROM THE INSIDE.
ANYWAY, I'M STARTING BY TRYING TO HELP YOU ESCAPE.

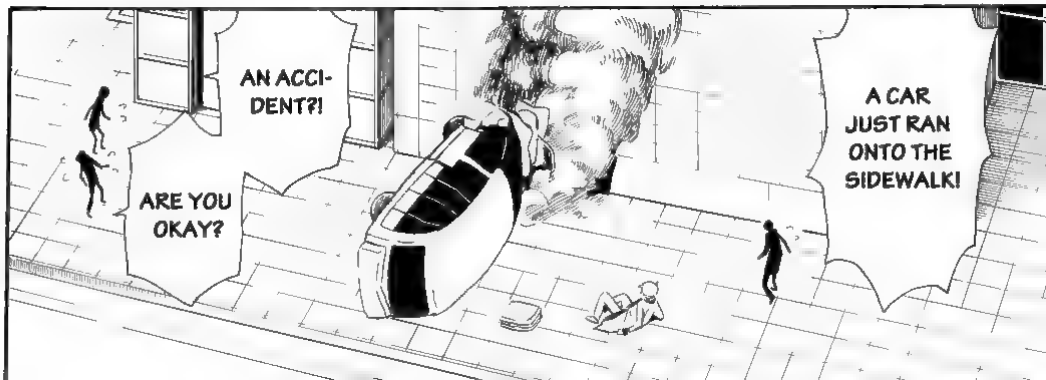
TO PASSION AND DESPER-ATION.
SO WE DON'T LOSE EVERY-THING

BUT...
DON'T DIE IN FRONT OF ME.
I HATE YOU, LAFALLE.


SKID
ジャ
ジャジャリ
SCREECH
HONK

WHAM
MANAGER LAFALLE, WATCH OUT!!
SKWEE

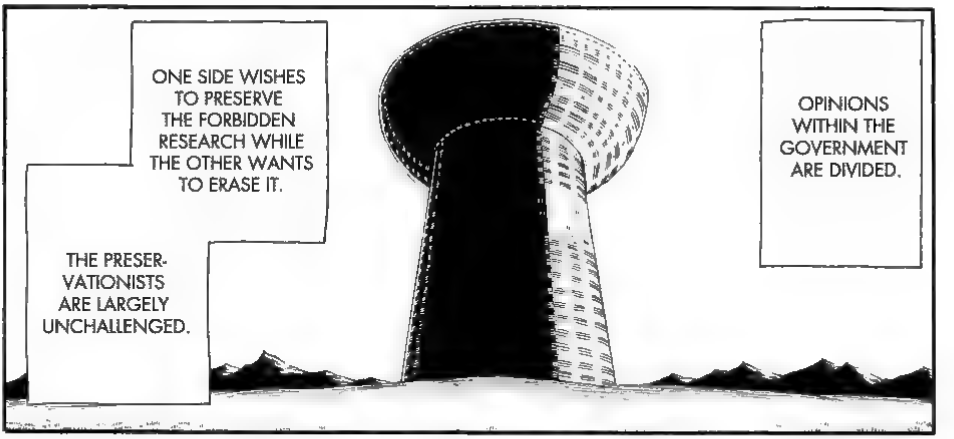
WHAM
WUMPH

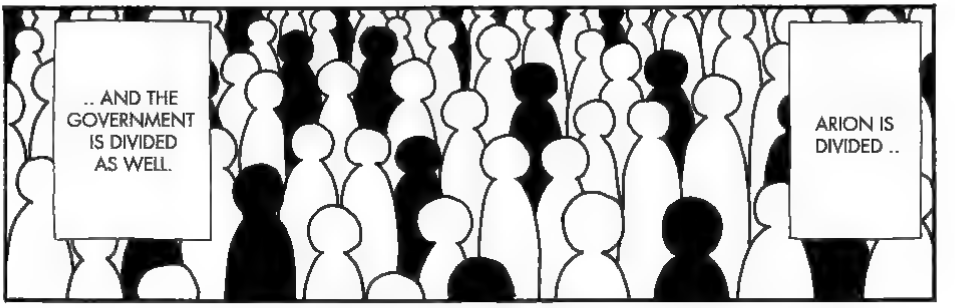

AN ACCI-DENT?!
ARE YOU OKAY?
A CAR JUST RAN ONTO THE SIDEWALK!

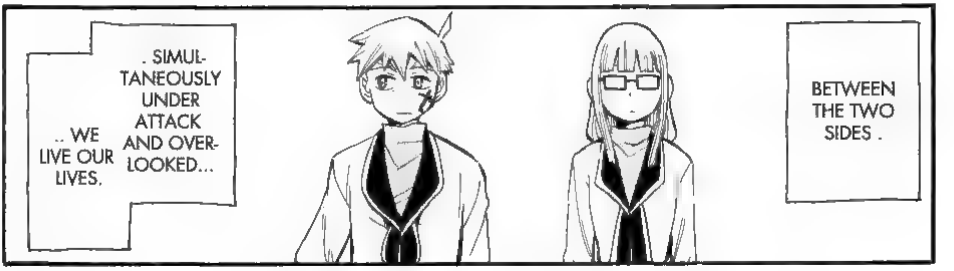
WHERE ARE YOU FROM, ROBOT?
HELP HIM!
THE ROBOT'S TRAPPED!
IT'S AN UN-MANNED VEHICLE!
WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE INSIDE?!
...
THANK YOU. I'M A GUARD ROBOT FROM THE SLEEPING TOWER.
YOU SURE ARE TOUGH.
LAFALLE.
HM.

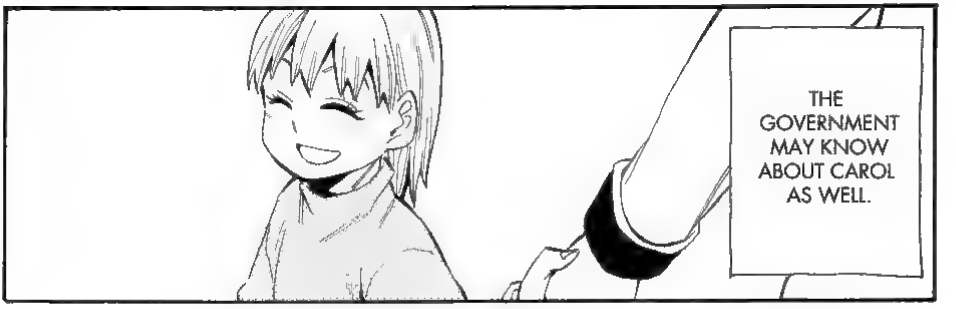
...
MAYBE HE LOST IT IN THE ACCIDENT.
WHY?
...YOU ERASED THE GUARD ROBOT'S LOGS FROM JUST BEFORE AND AFTER THE ACCIDENT.
WHO WAS IT?
WHAT WERE YOU DISCUSSING?
...A CAMERA IN THE CITY RECORDED YOU SPEAKING WITH SOMEONE.
JUST BEFORE THE INCIDENT...
...
...
HE JUST ASKED ME WHERE HE COULD GET GOOD FRIED FOOD IN THE CITY.
A STRANGER.
I COULDN'T TELL HER ABOUT ASH.
I'M GLAD I BROUGHT THE GUARD ROBOT WITH ME.
YOU WERE RIGHT.
YEAH.
SIGH
はぁ
..REALLY
IN ANY CASE, I'M GLAD YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.

THEIR GOALS OF REIGNING IN EXCESSIVE TECHNOLOGIES ALIGNED.
1 THE GOVERNMENT SECRETLY SUPPORTS THE TERRORIST ORGANIZATION ARION
...BUT ACCORDING TO LAPIS .
I DON'T KNOW HOW SHE FOUND OUT ..
I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW MANY PEOPLE IN ARION KNOW
NO. IF THEY KNEW, THEY WOULDN'T SUPPORT THEM.
DOES THE GOVERNMENT KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON?
HOWEVER, ARION IS ALSO RESEARCHING BLACK HOLE BOMBS.
A MANAGER ALMOST 20 GENERATIONS AGO WAS INVOLVED IN THE FOUNDING OF ARION
THAT'S WHY THEY TARGET THEM WHEN THEY GO TO THE CITY
2 ARION KNOWS THAT GENERATIONS OF SLEEPING TOWER MANAGERS HAVE BEEN CONDUCTING FORBIDDEN RESEARCH.
THE GOVERNMENT ALSO KNOWS ABOUT THE SLEEPING TOWER'S FORBIDDEN RESEARCH
3


ONE SIDE WISHES TO PRESERVE THE FORBIDDEN RESEARCH WHILE THE OTHER WANTS TO ERASE IT.
THE PRESER-VATIONISTS ARE LARGELY UNCHALLENGED.
OPINIONS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT ARE DIVIDED.


.. AND THE GOVERNMENT IS DIVIDED AS WELL.
ARION IS DIVIDED ..


.. WE LIVE OUR LIVES.
. SIMUL-TANEOUSLY UNDER ATTACK AND OVER-LOOKED...
BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES .

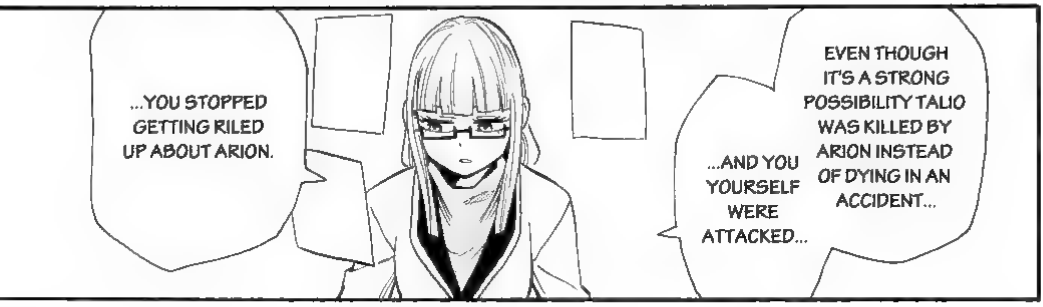

THE GOVERNMENT MAY KNOW ABOUT CAROL AS WELL.

...I WANT A FUTURE FOR HUMANITY.

FOR THIS GIRL'S SAKE...

I REFUSE TO SPEND MY LIFE WATCHING HUMANKIND DIE!!
YOU'VE BEEN ACTING STRANGE LATELY
HOW SO?
TELL ME WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU.
WE ARE A MARRIED COUPLE.
A MARRIED COUPLE, HUH? WE'VE NEVER EVEN HELD HANDS.

YOU'RE RIGHT.
WE HELD HANDS DURING OUR PROPOSAL.


...YOU STOPPED GETTING RILED UP ABOUT ARION.
...AND YOU YOURSELF WERE ATTACKED...
EVEN THOUGH IT'S A STRONG POSSIBILITY TALIO WAS KILLED BY ARION INSTEAD OF DYING IN AN ACCIDENT...

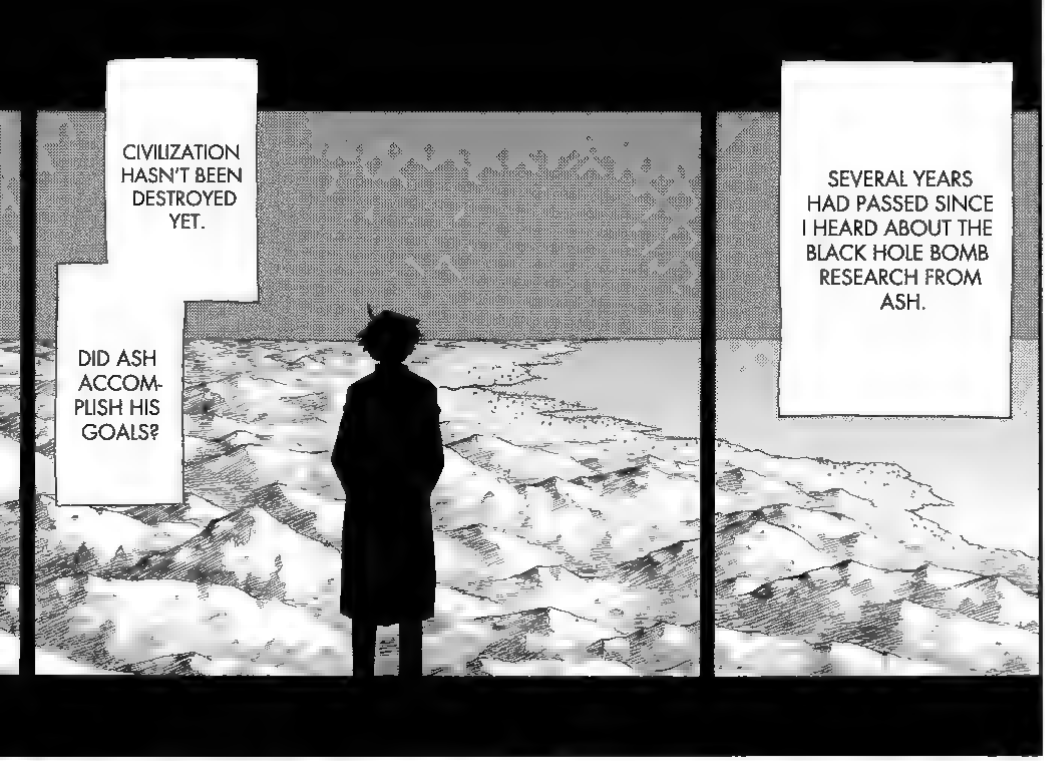
COME TO THINK OF IT, SHE'S RIGHT.

IT WAS THEN...
SO WE DON'T LOSE EVERYTHING TO PASSION AND DESPERATION...
I'VE ALWAYS HAD A SHORT FUSE...

...I FEEL LIKE THE FLAME OF MY HATRED BURNED OUT.
WHEN I HEARD ASH SAY THOSE WORDS...
ISN'T IT THE SAME FOR YOU. .
..LAPIS?
NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN CAROL.
I LIVE FOR HER.
. .THAT TOOK AWAY EVERYTHING IMPORTANT TO YOU?
ISN'T ARION THE ORGAN-IZATION...
I WILL PROTECT HER.
...
YES
I CAN'T TELL LAPIS.
IF YOU GET STUCK, AT LEAST COME TALK TO ME.
I WILL... THANKS.
AS LONG AS YOU FEEL THE SAME WAY, I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU WORRY ABOUT.

...BUT A QUIET ONE.
I WANT HER TO GROW UP NORMALLY.
NOT A LIFE OF USING THE CURSED POWER OF A DESIGNER BABY...
THINGS AREN'T LIKE THEY WERE HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO. I BELIEVE HUMANKIND IS READY TO USE FORBIDDEN TECHNOLOGIES.
LAPIS, I BELIEVE...
..THE POWER GRANTED TO CAROL IS A BLESSING.
WE SHOULD HAVE MATURED BY NOW.

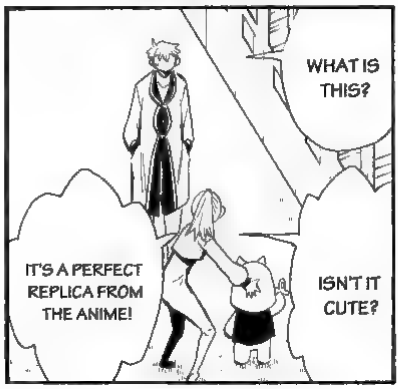
DO YOU BELIEVE THE NON-LIVING ARE ALIVE?
I HAVE A QUES-TION
MANAGER LAFALLE.
HEY. DO YOU HAVE A MINUTE?
HELLO.
THEN HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A GHOST?
ISN'T THAT WHY THE SLEEPING TOWER EXISTS? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
? THEY'RE ALIVE, OF COURSE.
I SEE.
HA HA. GHOSTS DON'T EXIST.
NOT ME.
I HAD TROUBLE FINDING A SUC-CESSOR.
SORRY TO BOTHER YOU.


CIVILIZATION HASN'T BEEN DESTROYED YET.
DID ASH ACCOMPLISH HIS GOALS?
SEVERAL YEARS HAD PASSED SINCE I HEARD ABOUT THE BLACK HOLE BOMB RESEARCH FROM ASH.

DON'T YOU ACTUALLY WANT TO EXTINGUISH THAT FIRE MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE?
ASH...
...ARE YOU STILL USING FIRE?
FIRE.
NEWS OF ARION ACTIVITY.
IT'S ON THE NEWS SOMETIMES.
NEWS

DADDY!
...PASSED
TIME..

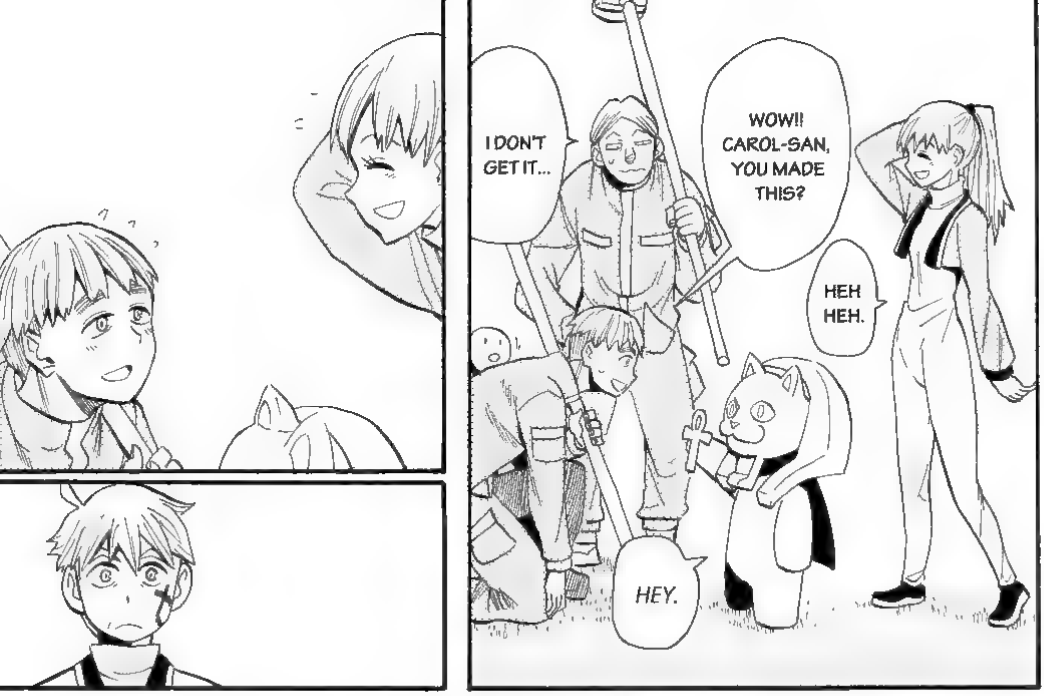
...


WHAT IS THIS?
ISN'T IT CUTE?
IT'S A PERFECT REPLICA FROM THE ANIME!

LOOK AT THIS.
IT'S ROBO-CAT.
HEY. HELLO.

DID YOU SEE CAROL'S ROBO-CAT?!
THIS GIRL IS A GENIUS!!
I KNOW. YOU KNOW THAT, TOO.
NOT THE A.I., ITS FACE!! IT'S PERFECT! IT'S ART!
REALLY... UH, REALLY...?

OH.
HELLO, MANAGER LAFALLE, MISS CAROL.
HELLO... HEY, THAT'S ROBO-CAT!!
WOW!! THAT'S A PERFECT REPLICA!
THIS IS PERFECT?


I DON'T GET IT...
WOW!! CAROL-SAN, YOU MADE THIS?
HEH HEH.
HEY.

...ELIA-KUN, OTARI-KUN.

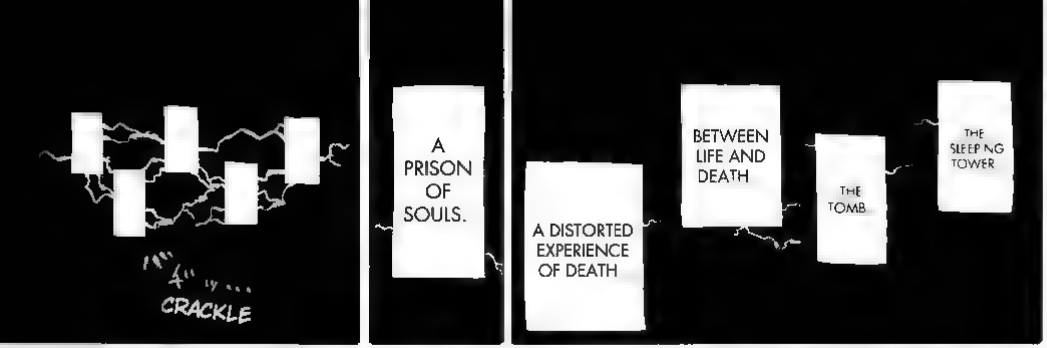
...
HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A GHOST?

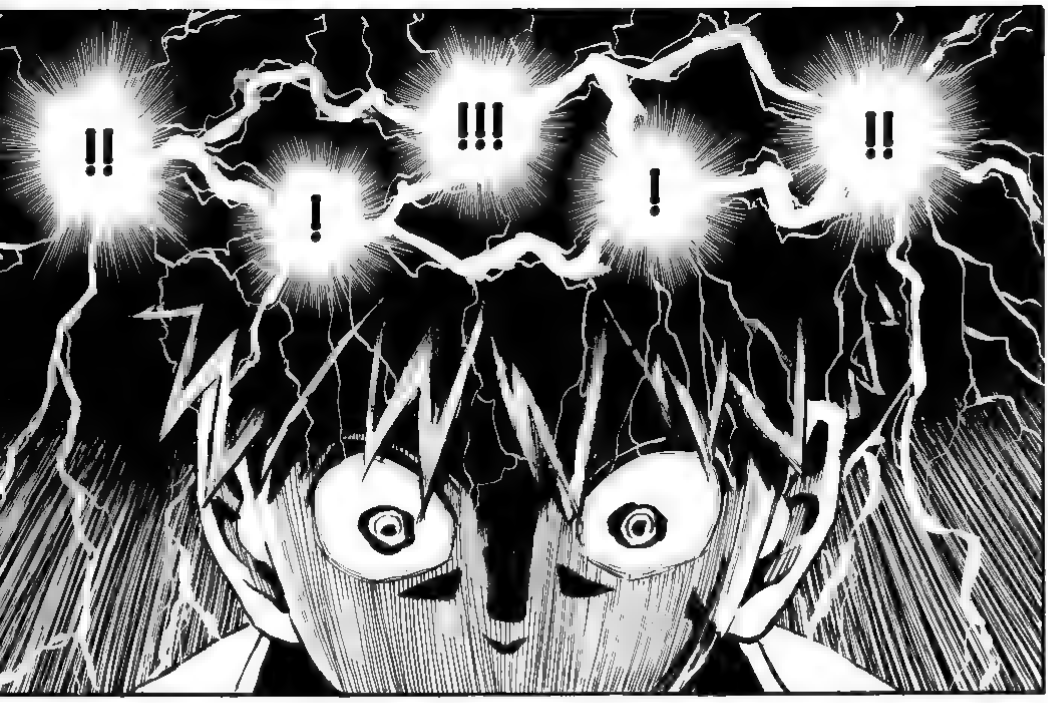
...
...

I DON'T KNOW...

BUT THEY MIGHT AS WELL BE DEAD.
WELL, I GUESS THEY'RE ALIVE.
DO YOU BELIEVE THE NON-LIVING ARE ALIVE?
WHAT ABOUT YOU, ELIA-KUN?

...AND THEY HAVEN'T SEEN A GHOST.
THEY ANSWERED SLOWLY..
SORRY FOR BOTHERING YOU
I SEE.
?
NEITHER HAVE I...
I HAVEN'T SEEN ONE.
A GHOST?
?
?
"THE NON-LIVING ARE PITIFUL NON-DEAD WHOSE SOULS HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED."
"THEY ARE NEITHER ALIVE NOR DEAD."
EVERY TIME I ASK AN EMPLOYEE IF THEY BELIEVE THE NON-LIVING ARE ALIVE,
SOMEONE INSIDE ME ANSWERS THUS.
FORBIDDEN TECHNOLOGIES . THE UNSTOPPABLE POPULATION DECLINE.
PERHAPS THIS PLACE SHOULD BE FORBIDDEN AS WELL.
DO NOT PERVERT HUMANKIND'S EXPERIENCE OF DEATH.
THE "TOMB," THAT'S WHAT WE CALL IT.
THEY'RE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH. THEY'RE HALF...


CRACKLE
A PRISON OF SOULS.
A DISTORTED EXPERIENCE OF DEATH
BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH
THE TOMB
THE SLEEPING TOWER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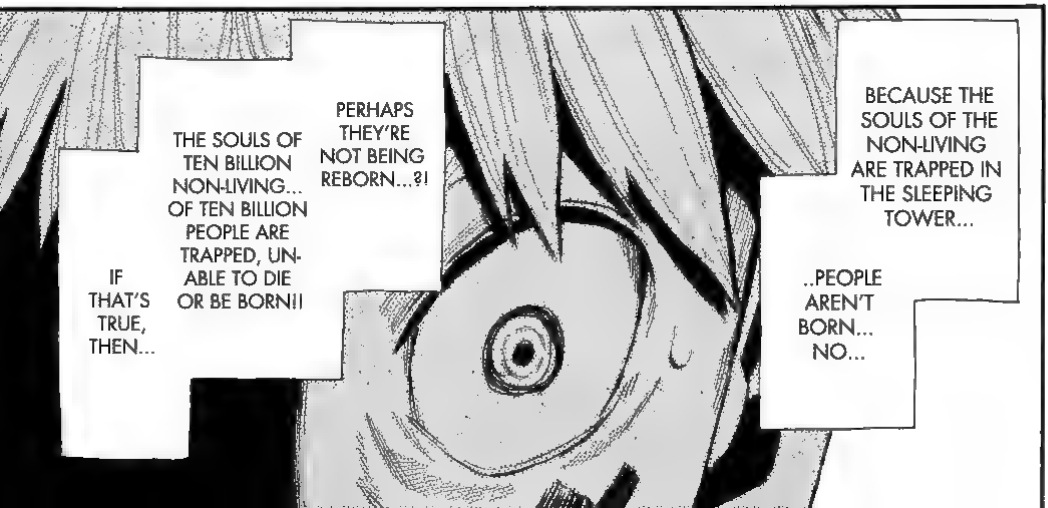
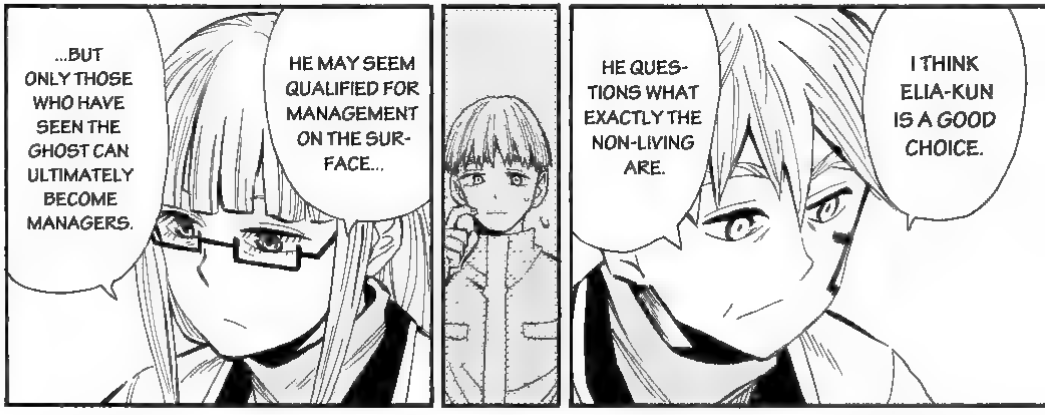

IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN...
THE SOULS OF TEN BILLION NON-LIVING... OF TEN BILLION PEOPLE ARE TRAPPED, UNABLE TO DIE OR BE BORN!!
PERHAPS THEY'RE NOT BEING REBORN...?!
..PEOPLE AREN'T BORN... NO...
BECAUSE THE SOULS OF THE NON-LIVING ARE TRAPPED IN THE SLEEPING TOWER...

THIS PLACE IS THE EPICENTER OF HUMANITY'S DESTRUCTION.
I DON'T BELIEVE IT.

CIRCLE 28
LAFALLE 7

I CAN'T BELIEVE NONE OF THE EMPLOYEES HAVE SEEN THE GHOST.
THE SUC-CESSOR PROBLEM IS A REAL HEAD-ACHE...


...BUT ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE SEEN THE GHOST CAN ULTIMATELY BECOME MANAGERS.
HE MAY SEEM QUALIFIED FOR MANAGEMENT ON THE SUR-FACE...
HE QUES-TIONS WHAT EXACTLY THE NON-LIVING ARE.
I THINK ELIA-KUN IS A GOOD CHOICE.

THAT'S IMPOS-SIBLE.
ARE YOU SAYING WE'LL BE THE LAST ONES?
..NOBODY WILL SEE THE GHOST ANYMORE.
MAY-BE...
...
I'M NOT COMFORT-ABLE TELLING SOMEONE WHO WON'T BECOME THE MANAGER ABOUT THE SECRET IN THE BASEMENT ..

SHE'S AN ORDINARY GIRL.
DON'T.
IN THAT CASE, WE COULD HAVE CAROL...

LAFALLE!

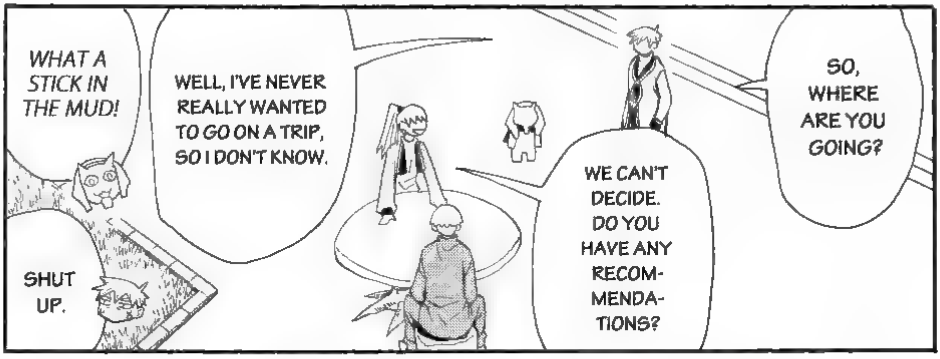
SHE'S A PRODIGY.
SHE COULD HANDLE THE FUTURE OF HUMANKIND.

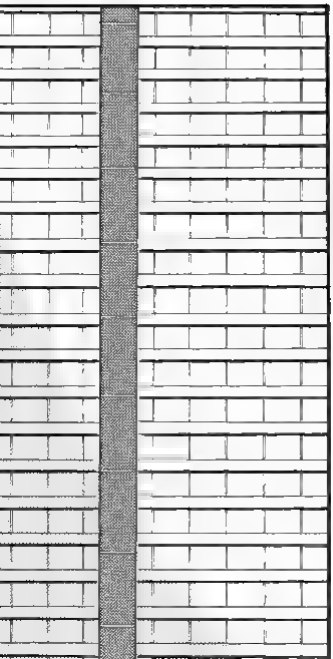
...
I'M GOING TO PATROL THE TOWER.

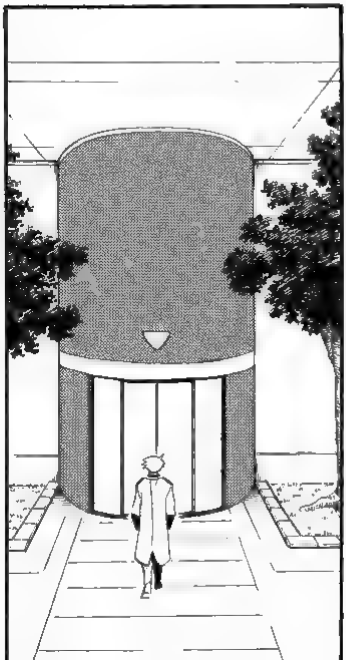
CAROL...
!

...AND ELIA-KUN.
OH.
DAD!
HELLO, PAPA. YOU LOOK GLUM AS EVER.
TUP TUP
ROBO-CAT... YOUR FACE AIN'T MUCH TO LOOK AT, EITHER.
THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT HIS FACE I JUST DON'T LIKE
Y-YES, SIR!
DON'T TELL MOM.
WHAT? ARE YOU TWO DATING?
SHE'S STRICT.
I-I HAVE THE PLEASURE OF DATING CAROL-SAN.
WHAT?
JUST THE TWO OF YOU?
NO, UM...
HELLO, MANAGER LAFALLE.
WHAT WERE YOU DISCUSS-ING?
HEY. YOU TWO SEEM CLOSE.
WE WERE PLANNING WHERE WE'LL GO ON OUR TRIP.

N-NO, THANK YOU, SIR!
THANKS FOR BEING A GOOD FRIEND TO HER, ELIA-KUN.
...
I SEE.

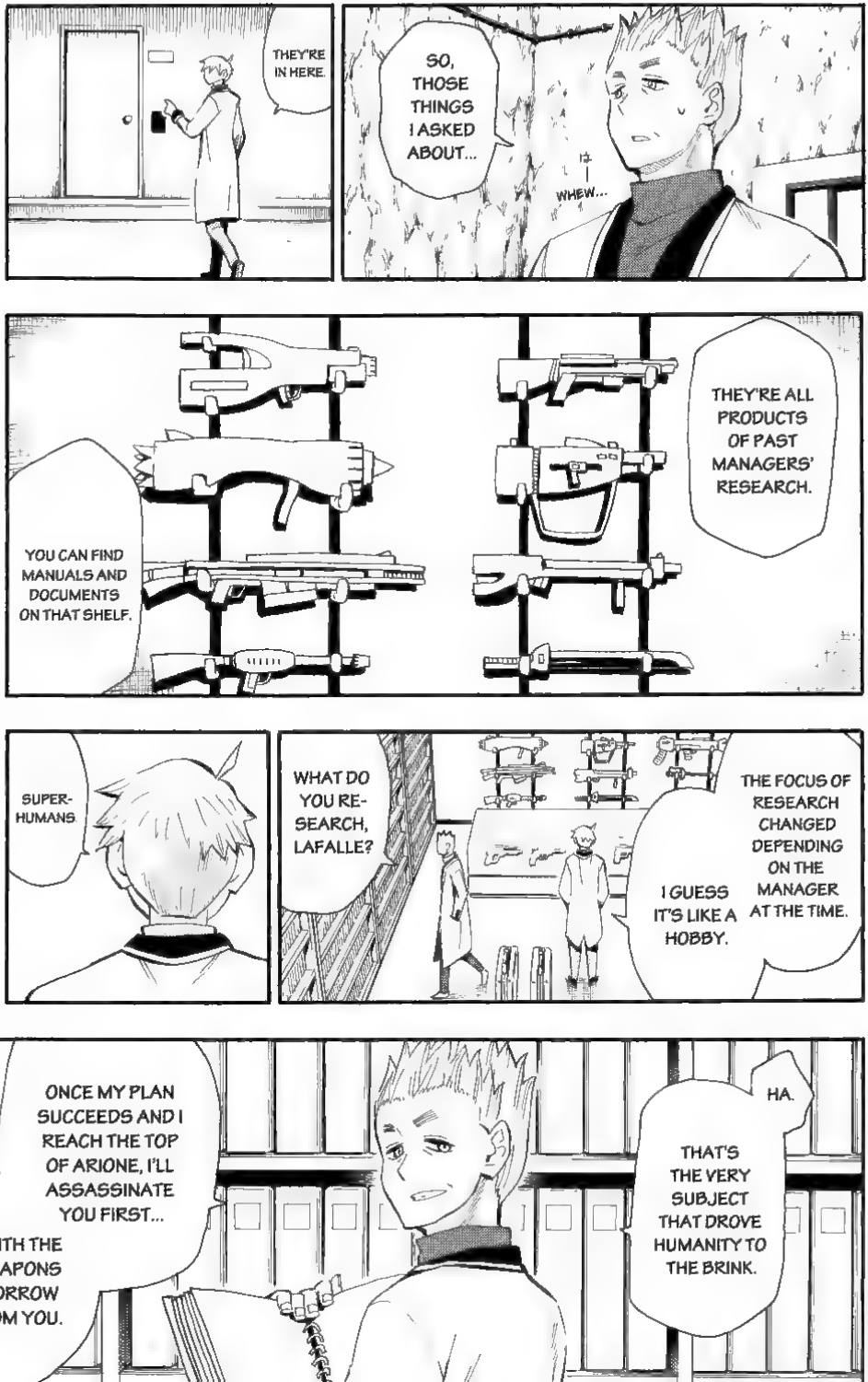

WHAT A STICK IN THE MUD!
SHUT UP.
WELL, I'VE NEVER REALLY WANTED TO GO ON A TRIP, SO I DON'T KNOW.
WE CAN'T DECIDE. DO YOU HAVE ANY RECOM-MENDA-TIONS?
SO, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?





HM?
...
GOOD WORK, SIR.
OKAY.
I'D BETTER GO.

I'M COUNTING ON YOU.
YOU HAVE A MESSAGE FROM ASH-SAMA.
I KNOW
AREA SPACIFICA.
I THOUGHT THE SAME THING THE FIRST TIME I CAME HERE.
YEAH.
IT'S LIKE THE REMAINS OF AN ANCIENT CIVILIZATION I HAD NO IDEA IT WAS SO HUGE.


THEY'RE IN HERE.
SO, THOSE THINGS I ASKED ABOUT...
WHEW...
YOU CAN FIND MANUALS AND DOCUMENTS ON THAT SHELF.
THEY'RE ALL PRODUCTS OF PAST MANAGERS' RESEARCH.
SUPER-HUMANS
WHAT DO YOU RE-SEARCH, LAFALLE?
I GUESS IT'S LIKE A HOBBY.
THE FOCUS OF RESEARCH CHANGED DEPENDING ON THE MANAGER AT THE TIME.
ONCE MY PLAN SUCCEEDS AND I REACH THE TOP OF ARIONE, I'LL ASSASSINATE YOU FIRST...
...WITH THE WEAPONS I BORROW FROM YOU.
HA.
THAT'S THE VERY SUBJECT THAT DROVE HUMANITY TO THE BRINK.

ISN'T THE SLEEPING TOWER ONE OF THE TECHNOLOGICAL TARGETS OF YOUR TERRORIST ATTACKS?
WHAT, ARE YOU BEGGING FOR YOUR LIFE?
HEH HEH HEH
ALSO, IT'S ARIONE, NOT ARION.
I THINK IT'D BE BETTER FOR YOU ARION-TYPES NOT TO KILL ME.
I'M THINKING OF HALTING THE SLEEPING TOWER.

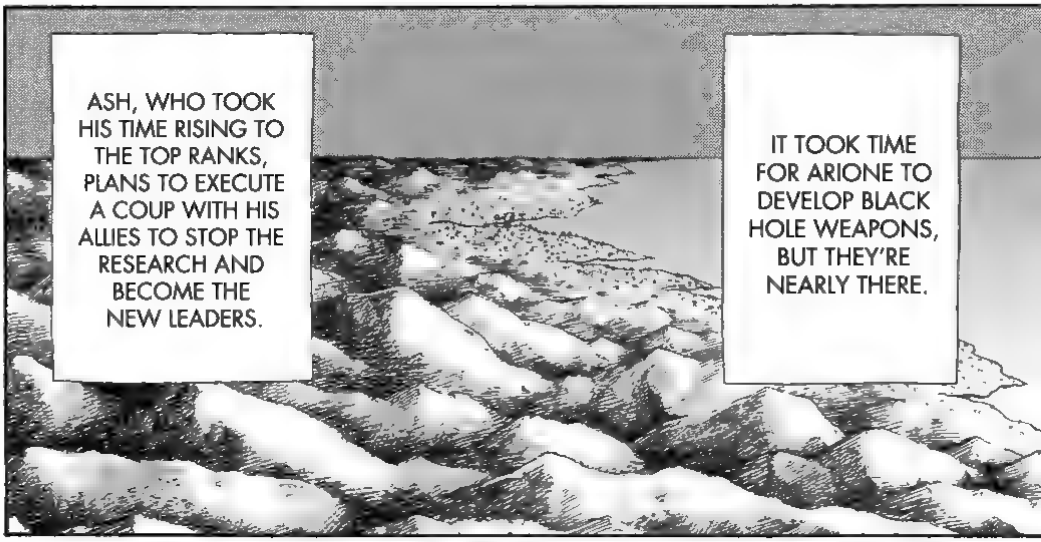
WHOA, THERE...
I'LL RELEASE THE SOULS OF THE NON-LIVING..
.AND RETURN THEM TO HEAVEN
PFAH!

HA HA HA HA HA HA!
YOU'RE INCRED-IBLE!
THEY SAY A HUNDRED KILLS MAKES YOU A HERO, BUT YOU'D BE A GOD!
YOU'D BE A SUPER MASS MUR-DERER!
AFTER ALL, YOU'D BE KILLING A HUNDRED MILLION!

COM-
PARED
TO YOU
COM-
PARED
TO YOU...

YOU,
TOO.
HEH
HEH.

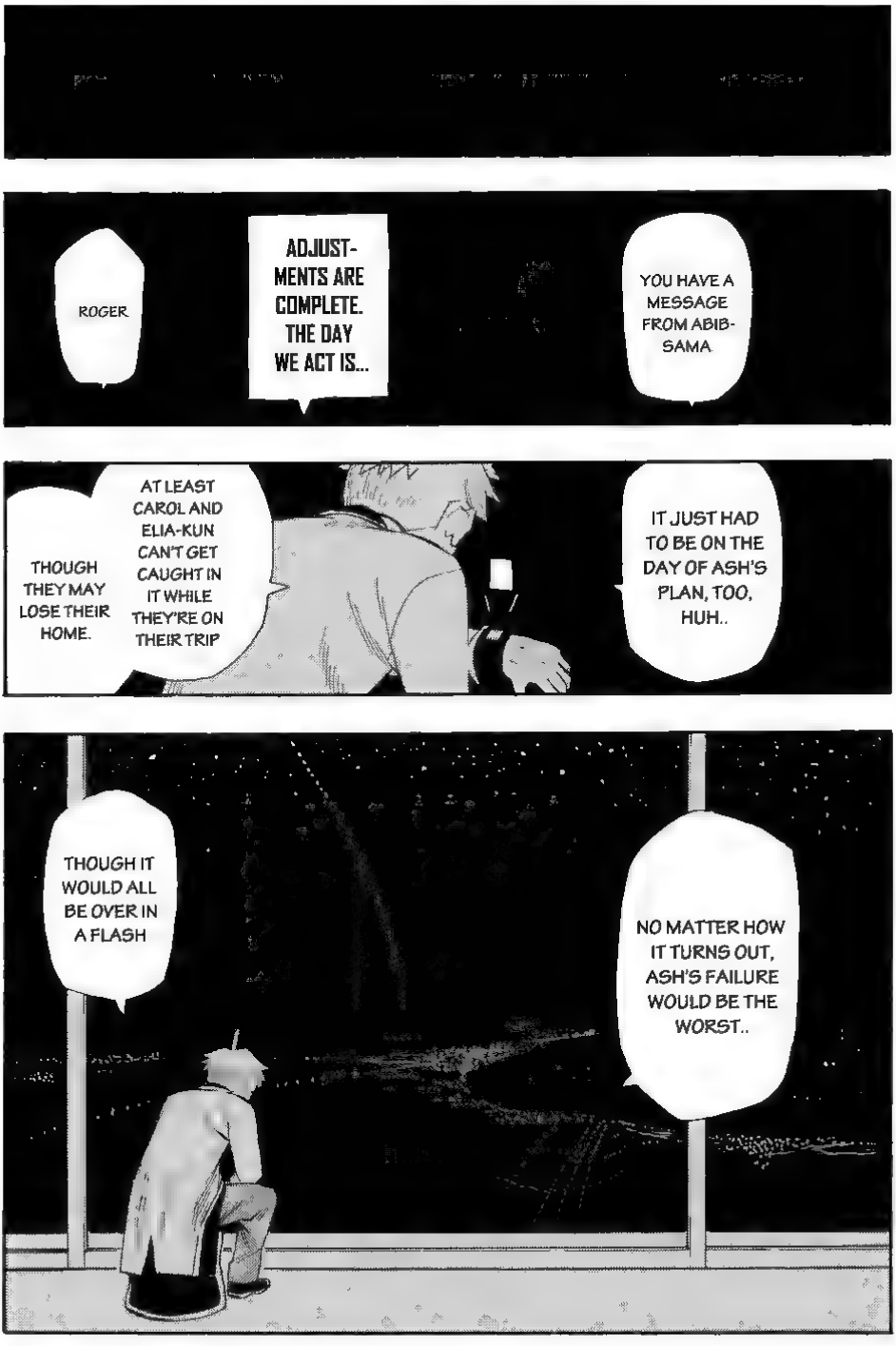
WE'LL HAVE
BIGGER
PROBLEMS
THAN THAT.
DO YOUR
BEST
IF YOU FAIL
TO STOP THE
BLACK HOLE
WEAPON
TEST...

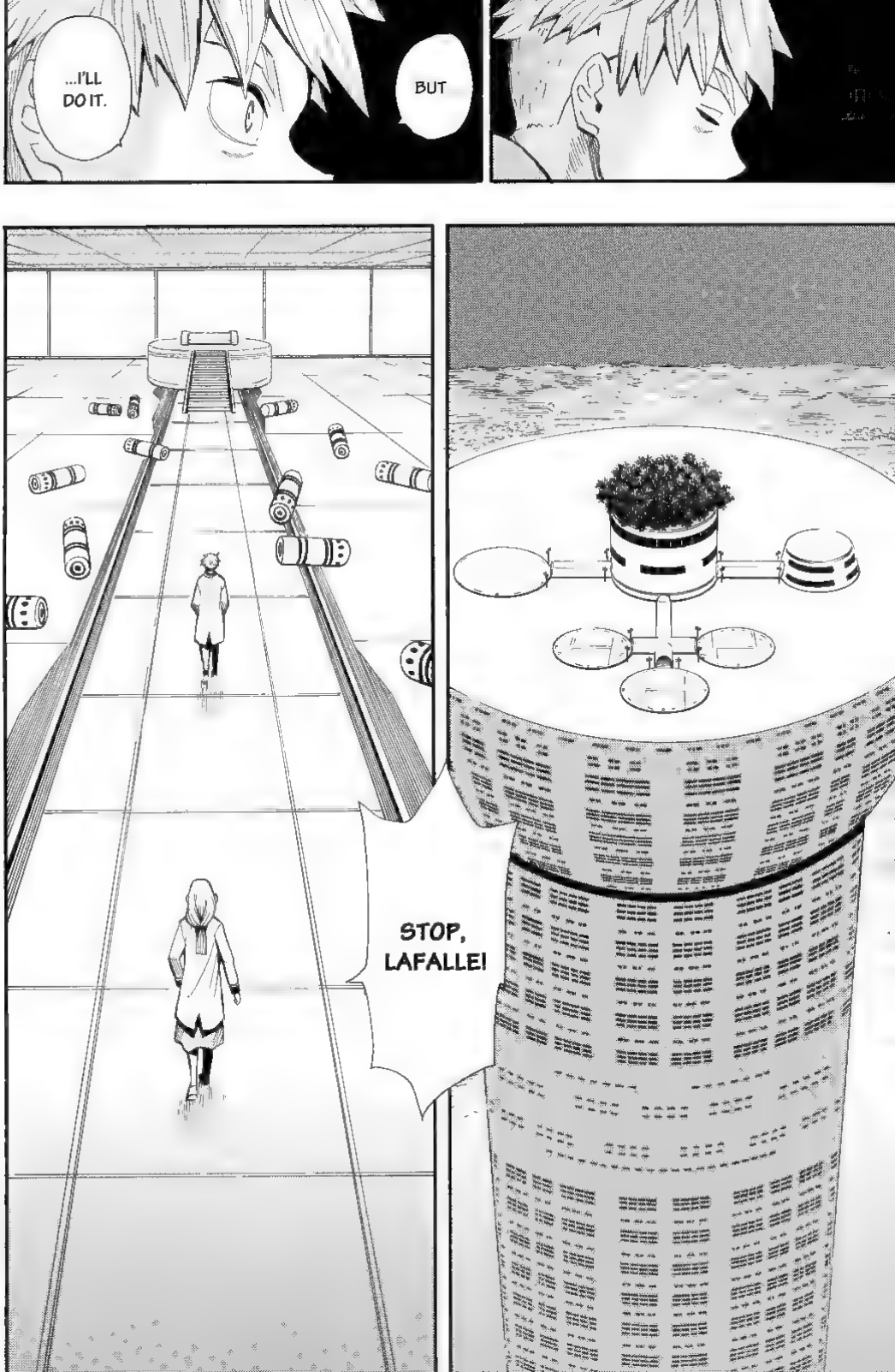

ASH, WHO TOOK
HIS TIME RISING TO
THE TOP RANKS,
PLANS TO EXECUTE
A COUP WITH HIS
ALLIES TO STOP THE
RESEARCH AND
BECOME THE
NEW LEADERS.
IT TOOK TIME
FOR ARIONE TO
DEVELOP BLACK
HOLE WEAPONS,
BUT THEY'RE
NEARLY THERE.

ALTHOUGH
DEPENDING ON
HOW THEY FAIL,
I SUPPOSE IT MAY
NOT MAKE MUCH
DIFFERENCE
WHERE YOU ARE
ON EARTH..
THE FINAL
BATTLE WILL
TAKE PLACE
IN THE MED-
ITERRANEAN
SEA. THAT'S
CLOSE.

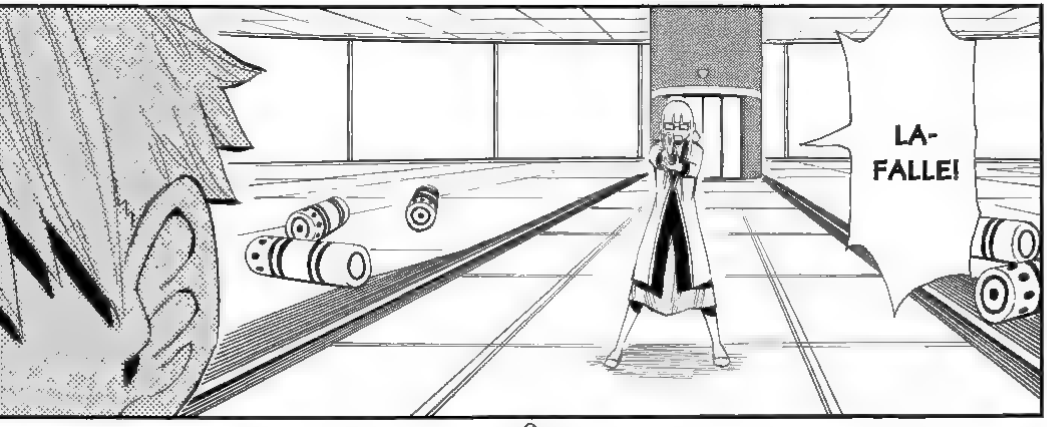
AHHH...
THAT'S THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE PLANET
CLICK CLACK
WHAT?
AAAH.
CLICK CLACK
CAROL, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT GOING TO NEW ZEALAND?
I'LL DISCUSS IT WITH ELIA.
CLICK CLACK
AHHH.
AS LONG AS YOU'RE TRAVELING, IT MIGHT BE NICE TO GO SOMEWHERE FAR.
I REMEMBER THE DAY I MET YOU AND MOM, TOO.
..I REMEMBER.
...REMEMBER THE BASEMENT?
...
DO YOU .
DON'T TELL ANYONE ELSE ABOUT IT.
GOOD GRIEF... IN THAT CASE, TAKE ELIA WITH YOU FROM NOW ON WHEN YOU DO YOUR RESEARCH.
WHAT?
I'VE ACTUALLY ALREADY..
SORRY.
THE CODE IS SPACIFICA.
YOU CAN USE IT ANY TIME.

...
...TO TAKE OVER.
I WANTED HIM...
I'M GOING TO MAKE HIM TAKE OVER THE BASEMENT.
...THAT'S IMPRESSIVE.
TIME MACHINES.
AHHH.
BY THE WAY, WHAT'S THE TOPIC OF YOUR RESEARCH?
EVEN THOUGH IT OBSERVES THE SAME POINT OF SPACE-TIME IN THE PAST .
.. EVERY TIME THE LIGHTNING STRIKES DIFFERENTLY
I'VE ACTUALLY ALREADY MADE A SMALL PROBE.
IT'S INTERESTING.
THINGS WILL BE FINE HERE AS LONG AS YOU'RE AROUND
. YOU TRULY ARE AMAZING.
AND HUMANKIND, TOO
...DOWN THERE.
THERE'S ACTUALLY AN EVEN LARGER AREA...
THE PROBE.
WHERE WERE YOU HIDING THAT?
I HADN'T NOTICED...
IT'S A SECRET


ROGER.
ADJUST-MENTS ARE COMPLETE. THE DAY WE ACT IS...
YOU HAVE A MESSAGE FROM ABIB-SAMA.
THOUGH THEY MAY LOSE THEIR HOME.
AT LEAST CAROL AND ELIA-KUN CAN'T GET CAUGHT IN IT WHILE THEY'RE ON THEIR TRIP
IT JUST HAD TO BE ON THE DAY OF ASH'S PLAN, TOO, HUH..
THOUGH IT WOULD ALL BE OVER IN A FLASH
NO MATTER HOW IT TURNS OUT, ASH'S FAILURE WOULD BE THE WORST..


...I'LL DO IT.
BUT
STOP, LAFALLE!

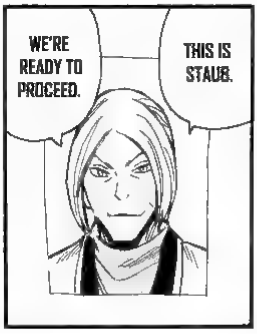
ARE YOU THE ONE WHO SHUT DOWN THE TOWER ROBOTS' SECURITY SYSTEM?
WHY DID YOU COME HERE?!

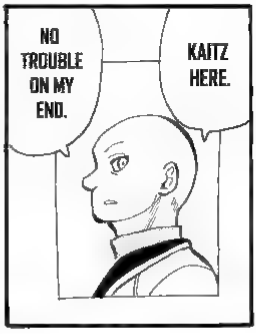

LA-FALLE!

ANSWER ME!

I DON'T HAVE THE SKILLS.
BUT...
...THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO DO.

WHORF.
LIKE-WISE.


THIS IS STAUB.
WE'RE READY TO PROCEED.

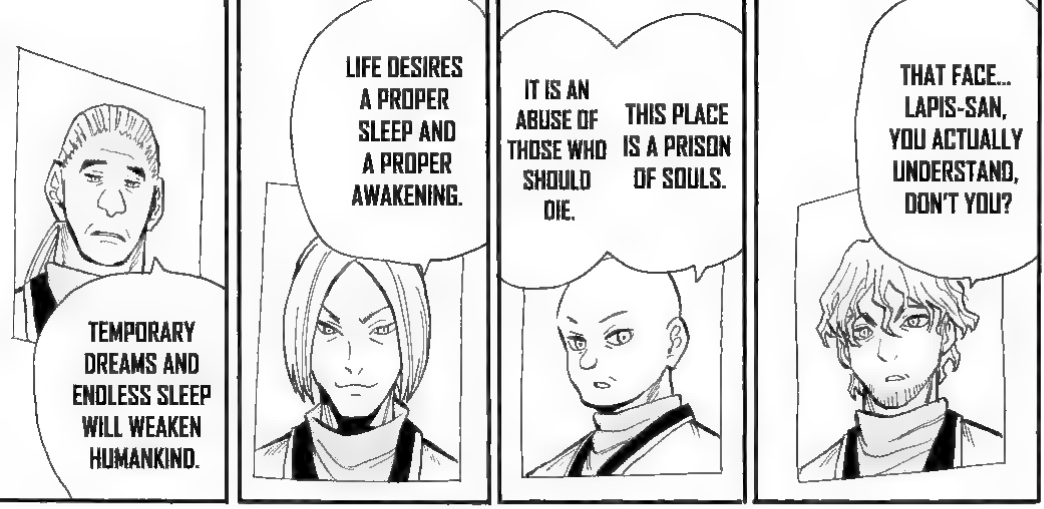

KAITZ HERE.
NO TROUBLE ON MY END.

ABIB HERE.
WAS EVERY-ONE SUC-CESS-FUL?

KEEP IT TOGETHER, LAFALLE-SAN.
THIS IS YOUR PLAN. HOW CAN WE ACT IF YOU DON'T?
I'LL HANDLE IT.
LAFALLE HERE.
THE OTHER INDIVIDUAL WITH MANAGERIAL AUTHORITY HAS CAUGHT UP TO ME.

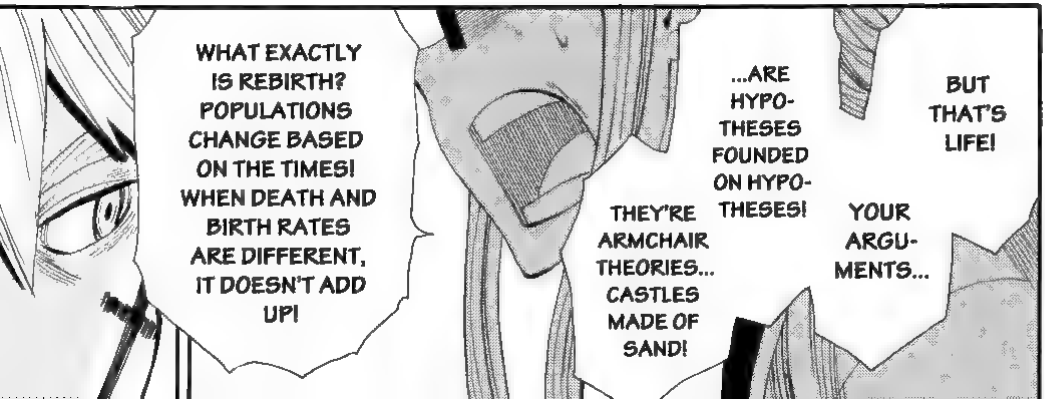
...WHO SYMPATHIZED WITH MY BELIEFS.
THEY'RE MANAGERS OF SLEEPING TOWERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES
WHO ARE THEY?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
...AND THE NON-LIVING RELEASED.
THAT THE SLEEPING TOWERS MUST BE STOPPED...
. ARE YOUR BELIEFS?
AND WHAT...
I WILL SAVE HUMANKIND.
I DO UNDERSTAND.
R-RELEASED?!
DO YOU EVEN UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?!
LET ME ASK YOU, LAPIS.
BY KILLING A HUNDRED MILLION PEOPLE?!
SAVE THEM?!

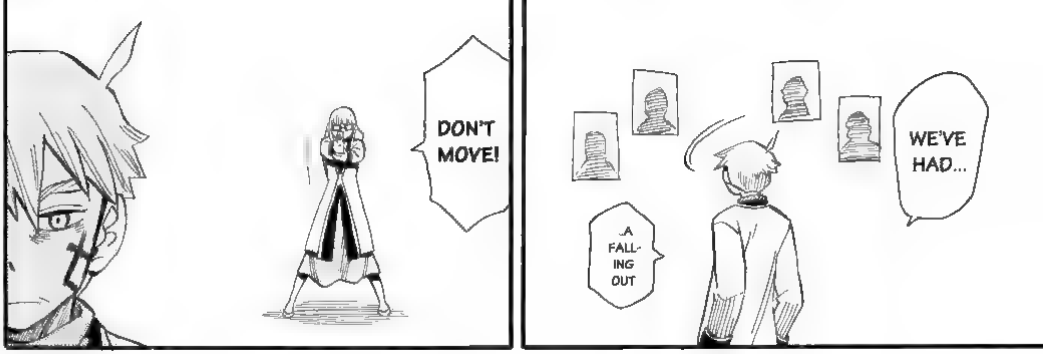
THEY'RE ALIVE!
...!
...THE NON-LIVING ARE ALIVE?
CAN YOU TRULY SAY...
BECAUSE THEY WON'T DIE PROPERLY, THEY CAN'T BE REBORN PROPERLY EITHER.
WE ARE FORCING THEIR SOULS TO REMAIN HERE.
BECAUSE HUMANITY'S CIRCLE OF LIFE ISN'T COMPLETE.
...WE'RE ON THE VERGE OF EXTINCTION.
BECAUSE THAT CYCLE ISN'T FUNCTIONING PROPERLY...
...!

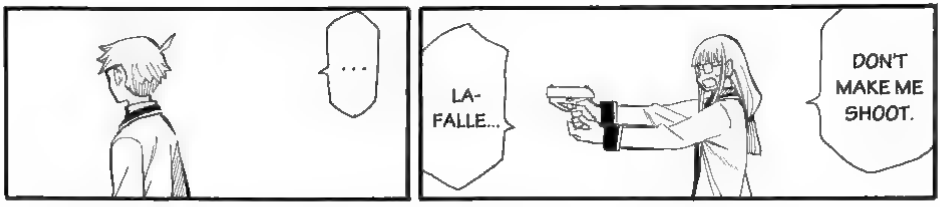

TEMPORARY DREAMS AND ENDLESS SLEEP WILL WEAKEN HUMANKIND.
LIFE DESIRES A PROPER SLEEP AND A PROPER AWAKENING.
IT IS AN ABUSE OF THOSE WHO SHOULD DIE.
THIS PLACE IS A PRISON OF SOULS.
THAT FACE... LAPIS-SAN, YOU ACTUALLY UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU?

YOU CAN'T KILL THEM!
THEIR CELLS ARE STILL TRYING TO LIVE!
BUT...
BUT THEY'RE STILL ALIVE!

THEY ARE ONLY RESPONDING TO STIMULI.
CELLS HAVE NO WILL.


WHAT EXACTLY IS REBIRTH? POPULATIONS CHANGE BASED ON THE TIMES! WHEN DEATH AND BIRTH RATES ARE DIFFERENT, IT DOESN'T ADD UP!
THEY'RE ARMCHAIR THEORIES... CASTLES MADE OF SAND!
...ARE HYPOTHESES FOUNDED ON HYPOTHESES!
YOUR ARGUMENTS...
BUT THAT'S LIFE!


DON'T MOVE!
WE'VE HAD...
A FALLING OUT


...
LA-FALLE...
DON'T MAKE ME SHOOT.

I'VE SEEN ALL SIDES OF YOU...
WE WORKED TOGETHER, MET CAROL, AND LIVED TOGETHER.
YOU'RE NOT MY TYPE...
...BUT I THINK OF YOU AS MY FAMILY.

AND WHEN YOU FINALLY TELL ME...
...YOU SAY YOU'LL KILL A HUNDRED MILLION NON-LIVING... YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!
I THOUGHT WE HAD GROWN CLOSER...
...BUT YOU WERE WORRIED ABOUT SOMETHING... THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING...
...AND WOULD NEVER DISCUSS IT WITH ME...

HOWEVER, WE'RE ALSO MOTIVATED BY EMOTION.
WE WANT TO SAVE HUMANITY.
LAPIS-SAN.
YOU ARE NOT WRONG.
...
YES.
SEE YOU LATER.
WE'LL DO WHAT WE HAVE TO DO.
SEE YOU LATER.
LA-FALLE-SAN.
I'M TERMI-NATING THE CALL.
STEP
SWISH
LAFALLE!

DON'T GET IN MY WAY!
LAPIS!
BANG

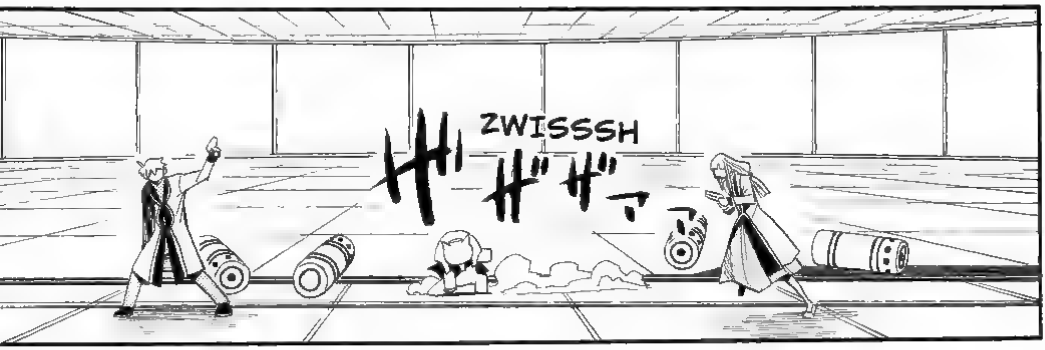
WHUD
URGH!
ガン
PTCHEW
WAIT...
...LA-
FALLE!
I WONDER
WHY...
STRANGELY
ENOUGH...

. THIS WAS THE MORE NATURAL RELATION-SHIP FOR US
...I FELT LIKE. .
ポーン
DING
ウィーーーーン
WHIRRR

CIRCLE 29
LAFALLE 8

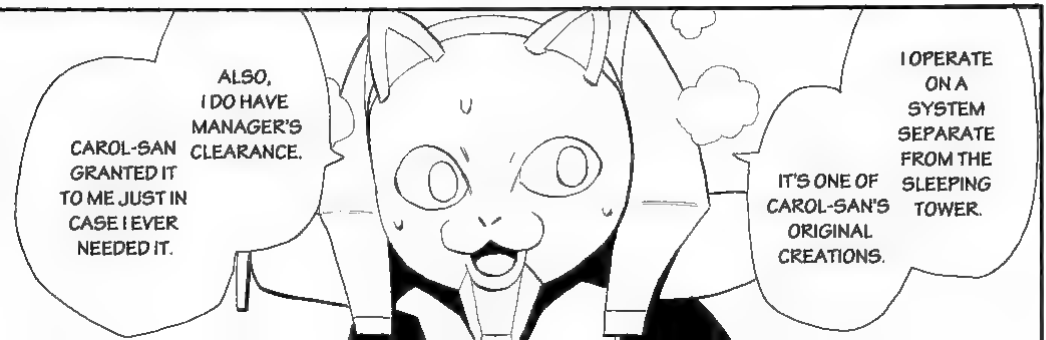
BANG
LAFALLE!
BANG
HUH?!
?!
DASH
HGCK!

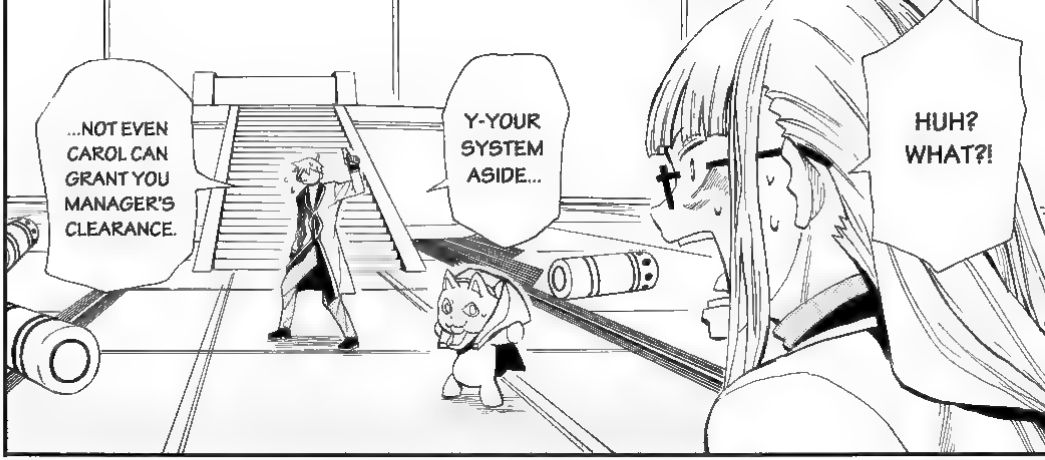
COUPLES SHOULDN'T FIGHT!
ZWISSSH
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!

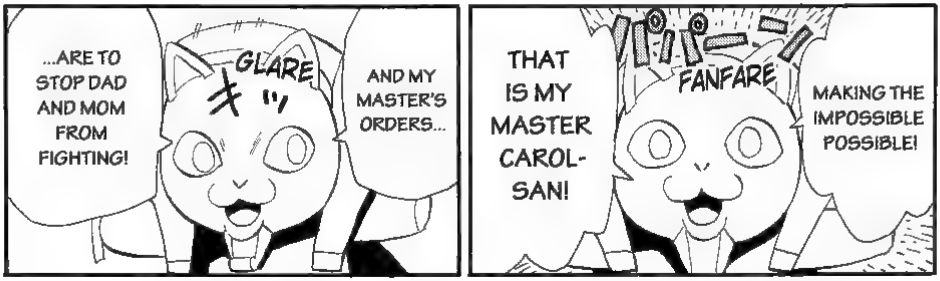

ZWISSSH

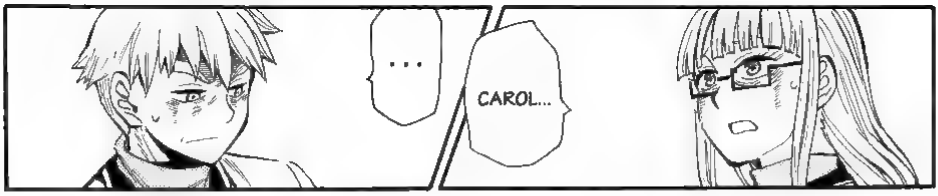
...AND COMING HERE REQUIRES A MANAGER'S CLEARANCE!
THE SLEEPING TOWER'S ROBOTS SHOULDN'T BE OPERATIONAL RIGHT NOW ..

WHY?
R-ROBO-CAT?


CAROL-SAN GRANTED IT TO ME JUST IN CASE I EVER NEEDED IT.
ALSO, I DO HAVE MANAGER'S CLEARANCE.
IT'S ONE OF CAROL-SAN'S ORIGINAL CREATIONS.
I OPERATE ON A SYSTEM SEPARATE FROM THE SLEEPING TOWER.


...NOT EVEN CAROL CAN GRANT YOU MANAGER'S CLEARANCE.
Y-YOUR SYSTEM ASIDE...
HUH? WHAT?!


...ARE TO STOP DAD AND MOM FROM FIGHTING!
GLARE
AND MY MASTER'S ORDERS...
THAT IS MY MASTER CAROL-SAN!
FANFARE
MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE!


...
CAROL...

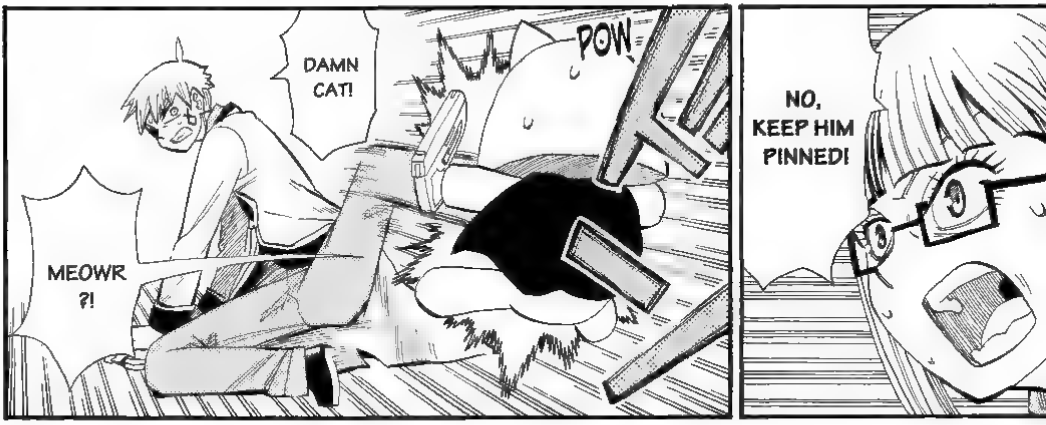
MR. DAD? WHERE ARE YOU--?
DASH
WHAT?!
...BUT YOU MUSTN'T USE GUNS. GUNS ARE...
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE FIGHTING..
TURN

STOP, LAFALLE!
MRS. MOM, YOU MUSTN'T USE GUNS, EITHER!
STAY OUT OF THIS, ROBO-CAT!
7" 4 SNAP

...RAWRRR!
GRRR...

SNATCH
?!
HISS!
JUMP
DASH
SPIN
HH WZZH

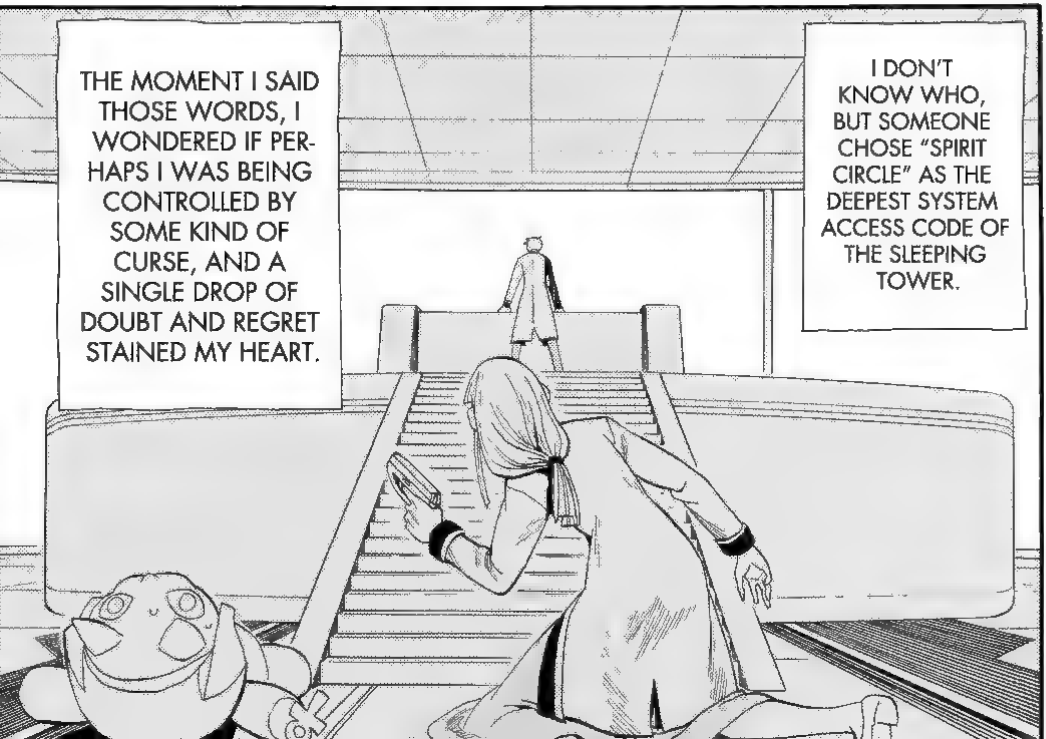
ROBO-CAT! GIVE ME BACK MY--!
MROOOW!
KLUMP
UGH!
WHAM


NO, KEEP HIM PINNED!
POW
DAMN CAT!
MEOWR ?!

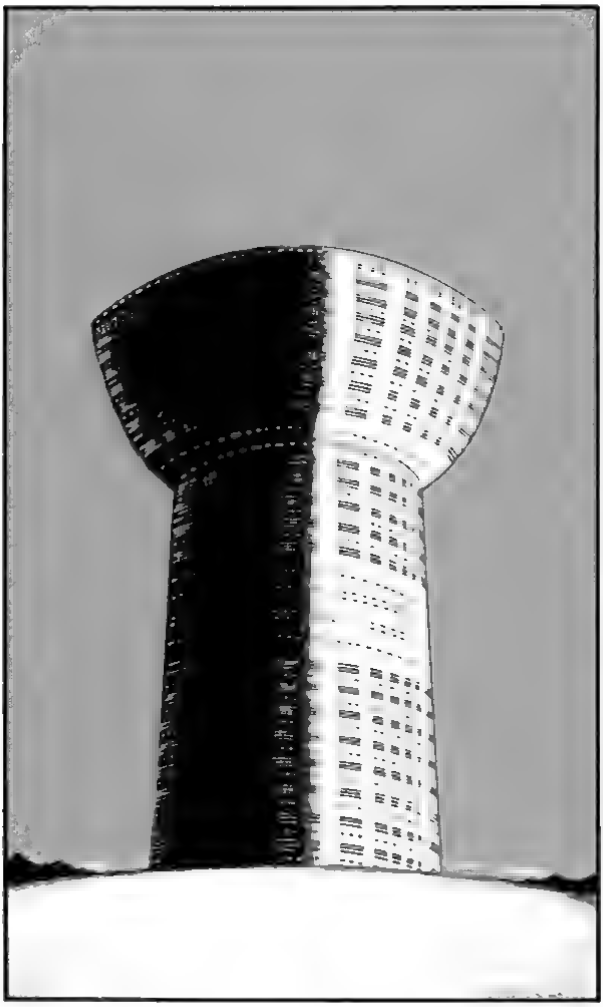
ACCESS!
HEY!
WHAT, YOU'RE THAT WEAK?
HOW COME YOU COULD MOVE SO FAST JUST NOW?
WHUD
UGH...
GRAB

CODE...
...SPIRIT CIRCLE!

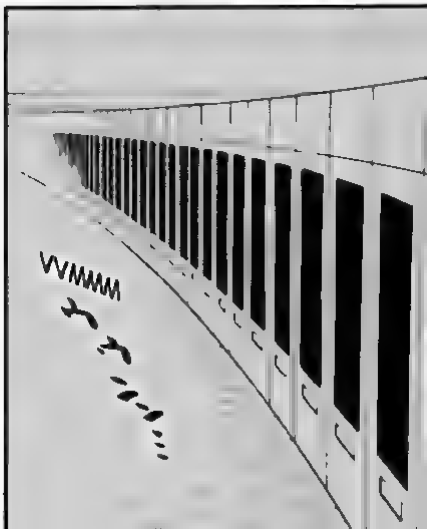
TURN ALL NON-LIVING SUPPORT SYSTEMS...
...OFF!

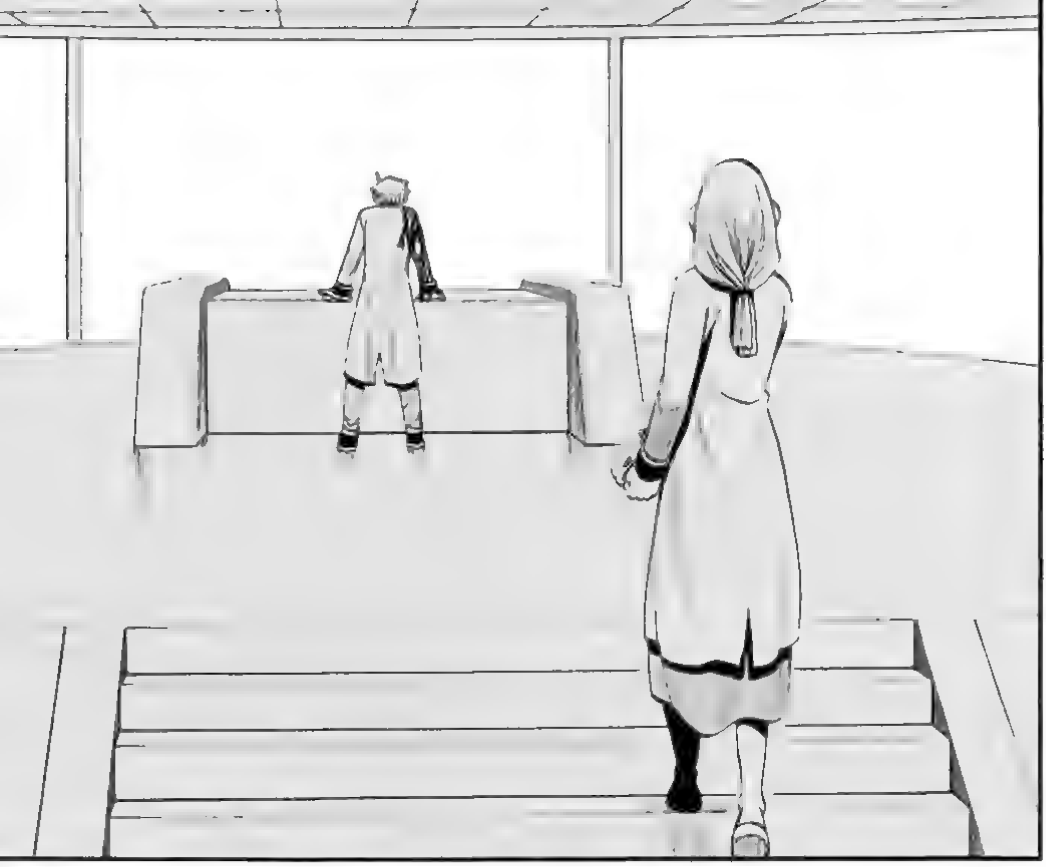

I DON'T KNOW WHO, BUT SOMEONE CHOSE "SPIRIT CIRCLE" AS THE DEEPEST SYSTEM ACCESS CODE OF THE SLEEPING TOWER.
THE MOMENT I SAID THOSE WORDS, I WONDERED IF PERHAPS I WAS BEING CONTROLLED BY SOME KIND OF CURSE, AND A SINGLE DROP OF DOUBT AND REGRET STAINED MY HEART.

SHUTTING DOWN SYSTEMS.

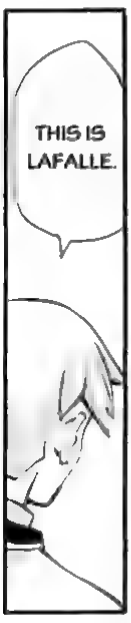


WHHHMM


WMMM



WE JUST...
...KILLED ONE HUNDRED MILLION PEOPLE.


THIS IS LAFALLE.

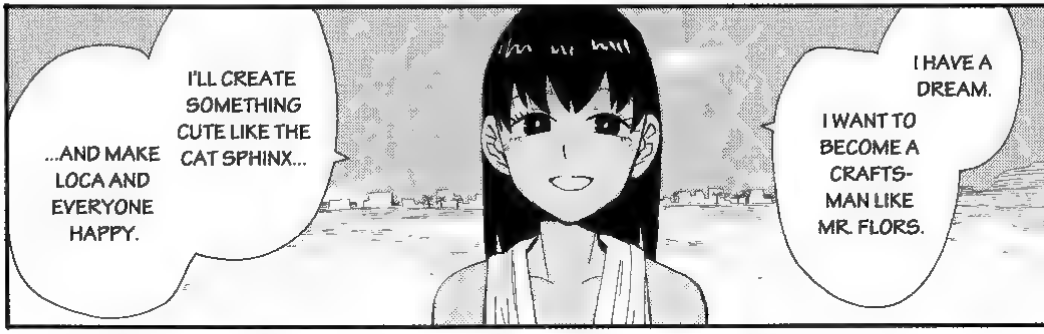
KAITZ.

ABIB HERE.

WHORF

STAUB.

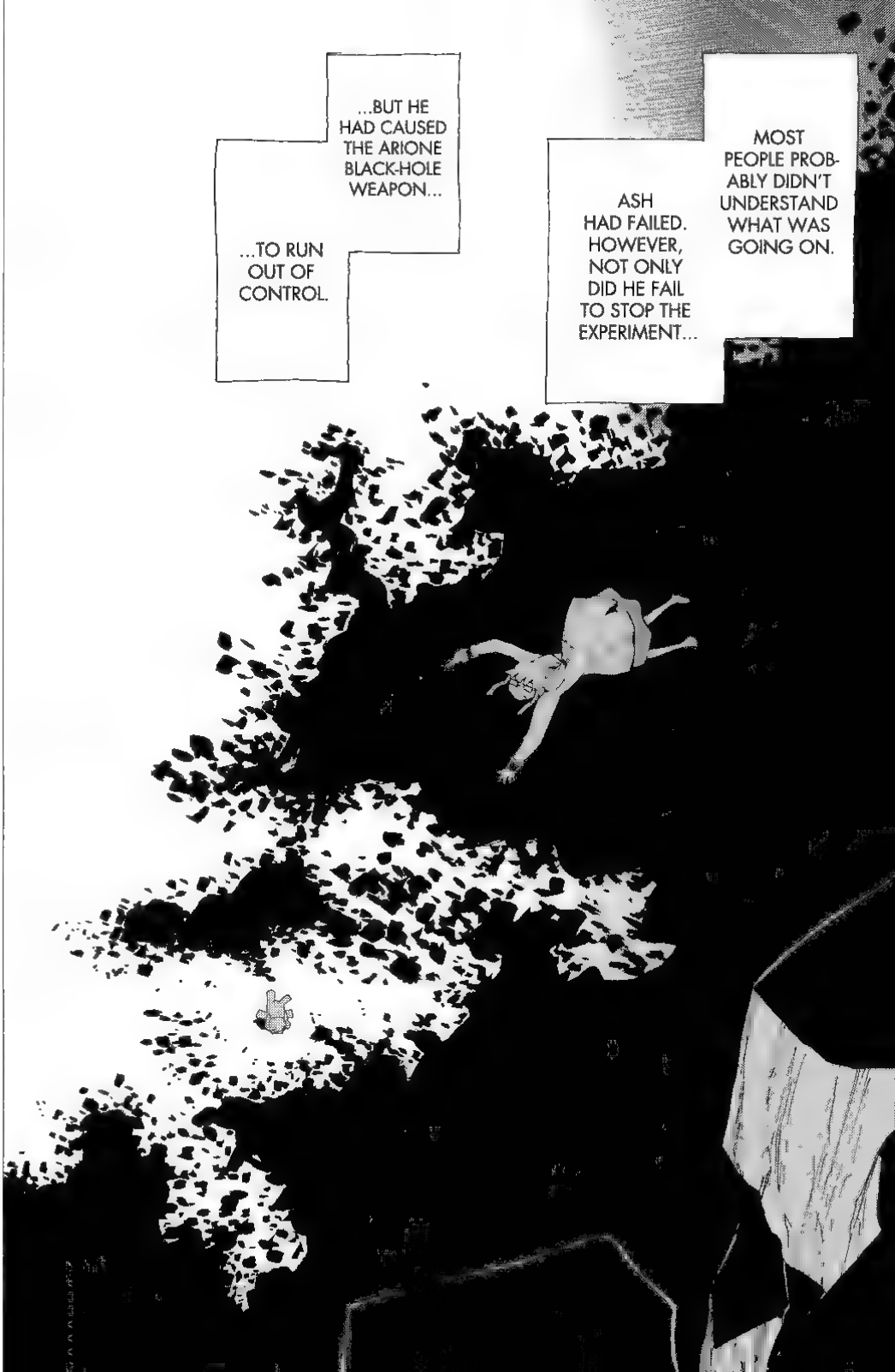
AAAAAH!
BANG
LEAP


I HAVE A DREAM.
I WANT TO BECOME A CRAFTS-MAN LIKE MR. FLORS.
I'LL CREATE SOMETHING CUTE LIKE THE CAT SPHINX...
...AND MAKE LOCA AND EVERYONE HAPPY.

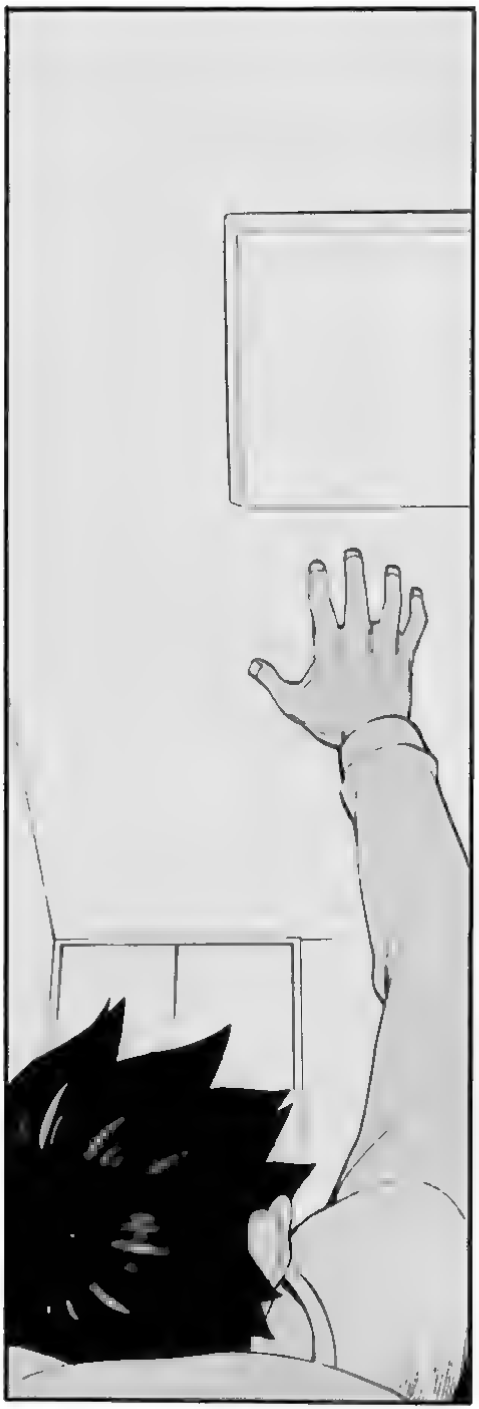
...TO STOP EVERYONE FROM FIGHTING.
SOME-THING FUN, THAT MAKES PEOPLE FEEL GOOD...
BZRAK
BZZT
WHAT...
...WAS THAT?

IN THE NEXT MOMENT ...

...IT
SUDDENLY
HAPPENED.


MOST PEOPLE PROBABLY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT WAS GOING ON.
ASH HAD FAILED. HOWEVER, NOT ONLY DID HE FAIL TO STOP THE EXPERIMENT...
...BUT HE HAD CAUSED THE ARIONE BLACK-HOLE WEAPON...
...TO RUN OUT OF CONTROL.

IN A SINGLE MOMENT, EVERYTHING TURNED INTO NOTHING.
OUR DIS-PUTE...
...THE UNENDING SUFFERING OF THE NON-LIVING...
...AND EVEN THE CONFLICT OVER THE FUTURE OF HUMANITY.
EVERY-THING THAT HAD LIVED.

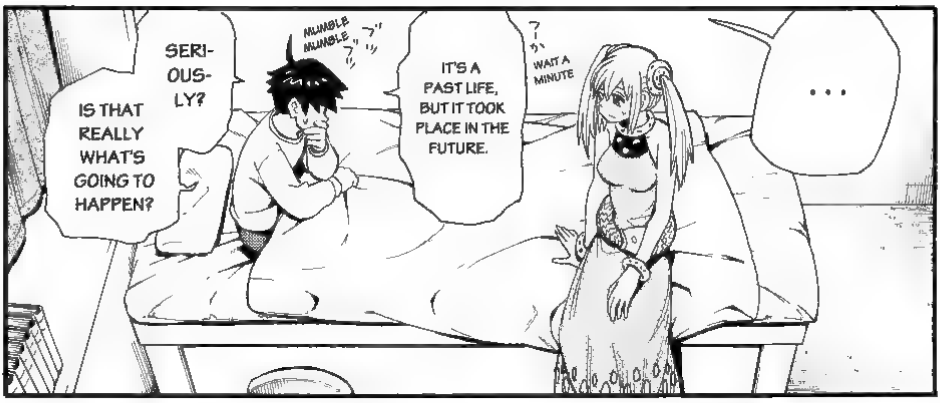


IN THE END, I SAW...
. A WATER-FALL OF LIGHT FALLING INTO THE SKY.

THE...
LURCH
THE EARTH WAS DE-STROYED?!
WHOA!
H-HEY?
WHAT'S WRONG, FUUTA?
DID SOME-THING HAP-PEN?
I-IT'S NOTHING! I WAS HALF-ASLEEP!
I WAS DREAM-ING!
BAM BAM
BA-DUM BA-DUM

I'M BACK, RUNE.
OH. YEAH...

WEL-COME BACK...
...MAS-TER.
UM...


IS THAT REALLY WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN?
SERI-OUS-LY?
MUMBLE MUMBLE
IT'S A PAST LIFE, BUT IT TOOK PLACE IN THE FUTURE.
WAIT A MINUTE
...

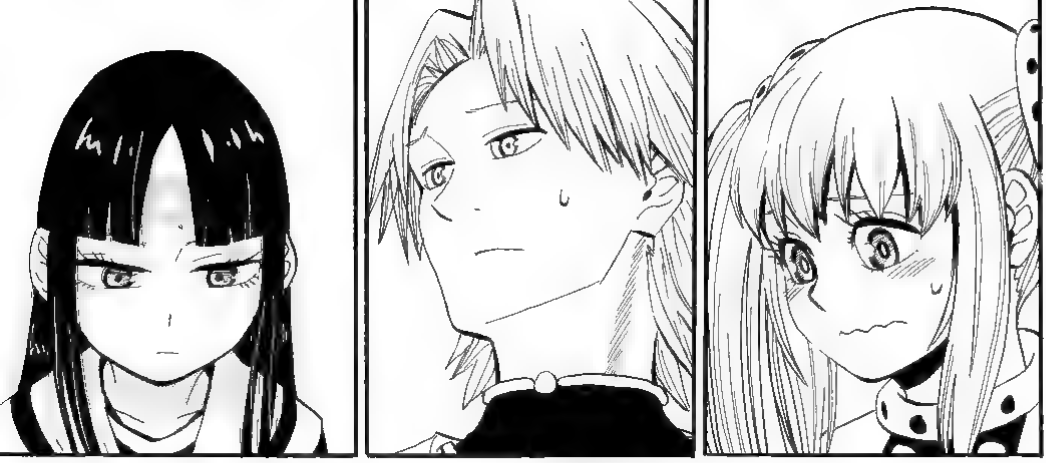
...

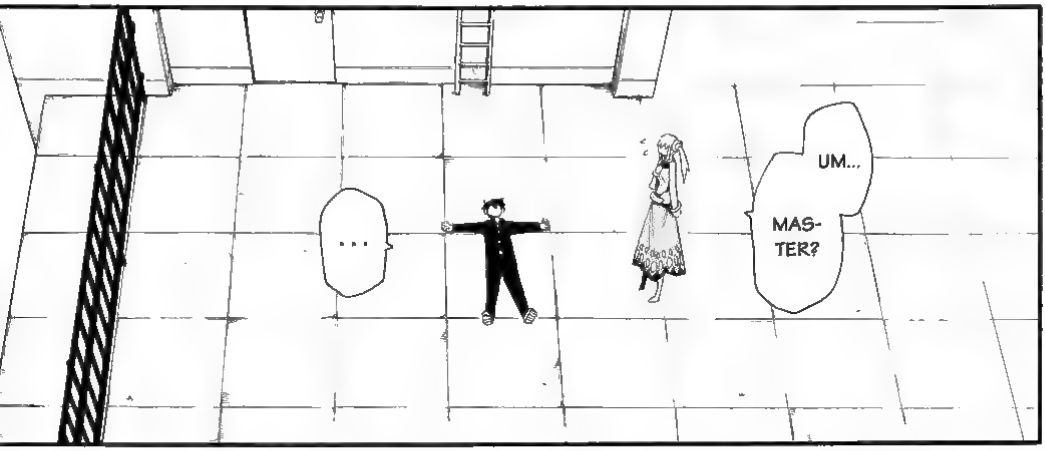
THE LAST TIME I SAW ISHIGAMI-SAN'S SPIRIT CIRCLE, THERE WERE FIVE FLAMES...
WHOOSH
SNIFF

I'LL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL WHEN I TALK TO HER. THOUGH SHE MAY SEE IT EVENTUALLY, TELLING HER WOULD BE TOO GREAT A SHOCK.
THAT ENDING... BUT MAYBE LAPIS DOESN'T KNOW. I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT'S THE END OF THE WORLD...
THE FIRST ONE IS FORTUNA'S STORY THAT I HAVEN'T SEEN YET, AND THE FIFTH IS THE STORY OF HOUTAROU AND IWANA.
HAS ISHIGAMI-SAN SEEN THE FUTURISTIC WORLD OF LAFALLE AND LAPIS?

...
...
O-OH.
...
GOOD MORNING
GOOD MORNING.

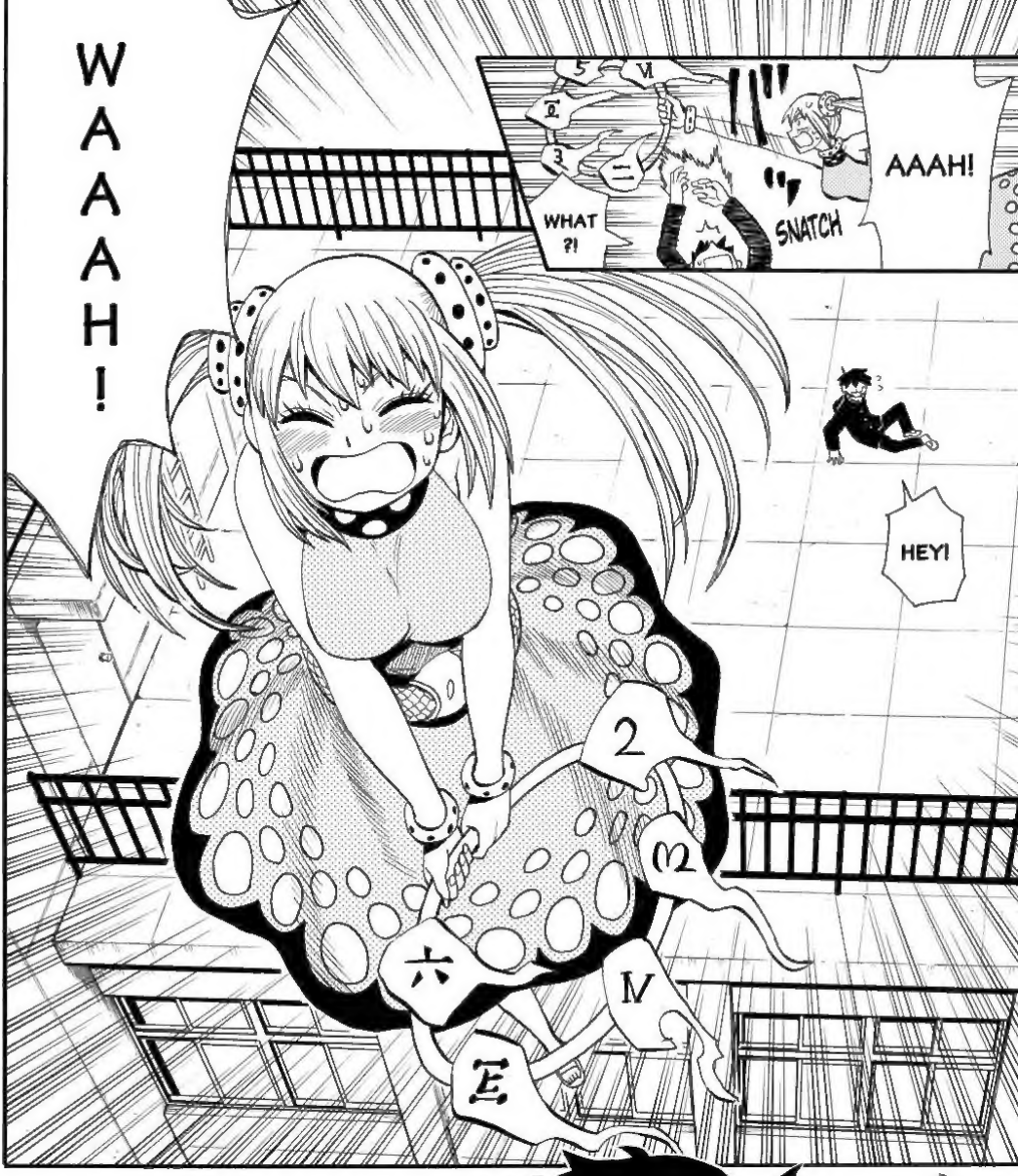
WH-WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THAT PAST LIFE?
...!
ISHIGAMI-SAN HAS SEEN IT.
YOUR MELANCHOLY IS JUST LIKE LAFALLE'S .. THOUGH I SUPPOSE YOU ARE HIM.
SKRUT
DID YOU ALREADY SEE THE FUTURE?
BESIDES, THE FUTURE WORLD HASN'T BEEN COMPLETELY SORTED OUT YET...
...BUT THERE IS ONE THING THAT'S CERTAIN.
I'M NOT SURE. I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED AT THE VERY END.
...ARE A DANGEROUS INDIVIDUAL.
YOU...
THE ROOF.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING? HOMEROOM IS STARTING.
SKRUT
...




...
UM...
MAS-
TER?

スッ...
SHFF
DON'T BOTHER ME, RUNE.
FWISH
I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT IT, SO I'M GOING TO WATCH THE NEXT ONE HERE.

AH... AAAH!
AH...


WAAAH!
AAAH!
SNATCH
WHAT ?!
HEY!

R-RUNE?
WHAT --?

スピリットサークル
魂環

スピリットサークル
第4巻／完

〈5巻へつづく〉

作画スタッフ
蝶田じゅえる
臼井仁志
相模 映

タイトルロゴ＆カバーデザイン
萩原栄一(bigbody)

担当編集
須見武広

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電子書籍版

スピリットサークル

4

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